

THE LONDON CUCKOLDS
BY EDWARD RAVENSCROFT (c.1654–1707)

PERFORMING EDITION
BY ROGER SANSOM

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**INTRODUCTION BY ROGER SANSOM:
CHEATING IN THE CITY OF LONDON, 1681**

“Young wives trying to cheat on their husbands” was what my wife Maggie whispered to our son, who arrived a couple of scenes late for Logos Theatre Company’s 2014 production of Edward Ravenscroft’s play *The London Cuckolds*. “Got it”, Richard nodded.

He had what he needed to know, and it seems to me a pretty good summary of the play – as indeed is the title. Before the Logos production, I only knew that a friend of mine had been in a couple of versions of *The London Cuckolds*, and it seemed to be almost a generic title for this sort of play. The Restoration comedy convention assumes that young gallants want to have affairs with the pretty wives of older men – to “cuckold” the husbands. Presumably the wives have married for a meal ticket and a position in society, with the freedom and leisure to look around for youthful beaux. It was probably a good thing DNA testing was not in existence.

As a happily married husband, this may not be my ideal source of humour! But there are some wonderfully funny examples of the genre, which it would be a shame to overlook. And *The London Cuckolds* is a great contribution to the cuckolds joke, beautifully plotted and its humour very much alive in the 21st Century. It is indeed in the tradition of the Whitehall farces and the *Carry On* films.

But Ravenscroft’s play has some problems for us. For a start, it is very long. I reconfigured a freely available script from the internet, modernised and standardised the spelling, layout, etc. My reworking filled 117 pages. The first time we read it, dramatically, it took over three and a half hours. The edited version is about two thirds the length of the original. Kenneth Michaels’ fine and very funny production for Logos had some quite literal and busy changes of furniture etc between scenes, which surprised me – as did the slickness and lack of interruption the cast achieved with them. The running time was about two and a half hours.

The following version of the script was not used for the Logos production at Teatro Technis in 2014, though it is very much based on that production. And here I must pay tribute to a sparkling cast and team, and a brilliant set by Sharon Lovett Lampi, which clearly and attractively set the physical parameters of the production. I learned a lot from being at the show every night – and once taking over a part, in a voice emergency – and have made changes subsequently to my script. It began as a simple abridgement, and evolved into this performing edition.

Modern theatre economics do not favour older plays, but I got agreement from Logos’s treasurer to have a cast of thirteen. We had looked at ways of additional doubling, but concluded that we were considering desperate expedients!

The playing version that follows is likewise designed for thirteen actors. I have devised a convention of the Two Bad Boys who play incidental mischief makers, then quickly turn their coats (perhaps literally, greatcoats and staffs certainly indicate the Watchmen of old London) and return as the Two Good Men, officers of the Watch, who investigate the mischief in the middle of Scene Five. They could however play this bridging/explanatory section at the beginning of the scene instead, if it suited the production better: either its staging – to avoid outdoor action in an indoor scene – or perhaps its casting. This option is marked in my script.

The Bad Boys are ideal small roles for members of stage management or the like, if such are available. But my design of thirteen actors assumes one separate Bad Boy and one double, which could conveniently be the player of Loveday.

Or if they are both actors distinct from the named characters, they might also change or modify the set between scenes – incorporating their spirit of mischief into the task to any degree the director wishes. Perhaps they could sing musical links, or bring on signs identifying the next location or time.

In Scene Two, the functionary who brings a letter can be either the First Bad Boy as Ramble's manservant, or just as easily the later player of Peggy's Aunt, as woman servant or landlady. The Watchman who appears in the fifteenth and final scene can be the First Bad Boy/Good Man again. New directors will of course think of new possibilities in this area.

There are printed modern adaptations obtainable, but I was careful not to read them while working on this edition. One was brought to rehearsal by the director and I just saw the outside of it. Another derives from a production my friend was in, and she described to me the very radical alteration it apparently involved, which is nothing to my purpose.

I hope this adaptation of a very funny play may be of use and/or interest. Please respect my copyright, and address enquiries to Logos Theatre Company through the website.

ROGER SANSOM
NOVEMBER 2014

THE CHARACTERS OF THE PLAY

Alderman Wiseacres

Alderman Doodle

Mr Dashwell, a City scrivener

Mr Townly, an urban gentleman

Mr Ramble, a would-be philanderer

Mr Loveday, a young merchant

Eugenia, Dashwell's "pious" wife

Arabella, Doodle's witty wife

Peggy, Wiseacres' young bride

Peggy's Aunt

Engine, Arabella's waiting woman

Jane, Eugenia's maid

First Bad Boy

THE CITY OF LONDON, 1681

SCENE ONE

[THE SET INDICATES DOODLE'S, DASHWOOD'S AND WISEACRES' HOUSES, THE LAST WITH A BALCONY.]

[ENTER ALDERMAN WISEACRES AND ALDERMAN DOODLE.]

WISEACRES. Well, Mr. Alderman Doodle, you promise to go along with me?

DOODLE. Yes, I will dispense with business to celebrate your marriage. Who else goes?

WISEACRES. Only Mr. Dashwell, our City scrivener and neighbour, who draws the writings for the jointure.

DOODLE. You'll be going as soon as business is done?

WISEACRES. Yes. Well, you shall see the most simple, innocent thing of a wife, I so hug myself with the thoughts of her.

DOODLE. What! Is she simple?

WISEACRES. A mere infant in her intellects. But for her bigness, you'd take her for a baby.

DOODLE. A discreet woman of thirty had been more suitable for you!

WISEACRES. But my intention is to marry a woman that will be young when I am old. You may talk of chocolate, and jelly-broths as restoratives, but they are nothing comparable to youth and beauty.

DOODLE. Oh, is that your drift?

WISEACRES. Brother Alderman, I have lived long a bachelor; I begin late, and so would lengthen out my satisfaction as far as I can.

DOODLE. I perceive that's as to her youth - but why do you marry one so silly? Where's the satisfaction of that?

WISEACRES. Why, a young wife that has wit would play the devil with an old husband. Even a young one can hardly keep 'em from kicking backward, in this age.

DOODLE. Some such there are - at the other end of the Town, but we have few of them here in the City.

WISEACRES. That I might be sure not to be troubled with a witty wife, I made choice of a girl that had no signs of wit. Her father and mother were none of the wisest; they dying, left this child to the care of her aunt, a good honest decayed gentlewoman, but a little soft too. Her dowry they recommended to my hands, to be improved for her use. I placed the aunt and child in the country at a lone house, instructed her to breed her up in all honesty and simplicity imaginable; never to let her play amongst boys or girls, or have any conversation with anybody but herself; and now being bred to my own humour, and moulded to my turn, I am going to reap the fruits of my long care and trouble, for this is she I design for my wife.

DOODLE. Were there not fools enough of Heaven's making? What satisfaction can a husband have, with one so simple?

WISEACRES. Ignorance is the mother of devotion. I can therefore make her do what I will; whate'er I shall say, she will believe, and whate'er I will have her do, she will think it her duty, and obey for fear.

DOODLE. Would you have your wife a slave?

WISEACRES. Oh, much rather than be a slave to a wife. A witty wife is the greatest plague upon earth. She will have so many tricks and inventions to deceive a man, a husband must always be upon the spy to secure his honour - from all which he is freed that has married a wife who has not wit enough to offend.

DOODLE. 'Tis want of wit that makes 'em believe the flatteries of men.

WISEACRES. But I say wit is dangerous in a woman, and simplicity is her best guard.

DOODLE. I tell you, Brother Wiseacres, you are in the wrong. A woman with wit will be cunning enough for men.

WISEACRES. Ay, and too cunning for her husband. You have a witty wife - much good may do you with her.

DOODLE. And much good may do you with your fool.

WISEACRES. Better be a fool than a wanton.

[ENTER DASHWELL.]

DOODLE. Better be a wanton than both!

WISEACRES. Your positiveness provokes me!

DOODLE. And your want of reason provokes me!

DASHWELL. What has raised this heat betwixt you?

WISEACRES. Oh Mr. Dashwell, in good time, you shall be judge now; we are in dispute here, whether 'tis best for a man to have a wife with wit, or one that's a fool.

DASHWELL. Why, I think you both in the wrong.

WISEACRES & DOODLE. Both in the wrong!

DOODLE. How can that be?

DASHWELL. Each would be safe in a wife, as to his reputation, would you not?

WISEACRES & DOODLE. Yes.

DASHWELL. A wife that has wit will outwit her husband, and she that has no wit will be outwitted by others beside her husband - and so 'tis an equal lay, which makes the husband a cuckold first or oftenest.

WISEACRES. You are a married man, Mr. Dashwell - what course have you taken?

DOODLE. Ay, is yours wise or foolish? Tell us that.

DASHWELL. Look you, the security lies not in the foolish wife, or in the wise, but in the godly wife, one that prays and goes often to church, the religious godly wife - and such a one have I.

SCENE ONE

WISEACRES & DOODLE. Oh, the godly wife.

DOODLE. Mere hypocrites all. A godly woman! I would not have my wife a church zealot. How many cuckolds must there needs be in a parish, when the bell tolls out our wives twice a day to assignments?

WISEACRES. Nor do I like my wife should be catechised by a smooth-faced reader, or a lecturer - I don't know what doctrine he may put into her.

DASHWELL. Well, the world has never been of one mind since there was above one man in't, and ne'er will be again so long as there are two. So let there be an end of this discourse, and to our business - where shall I bring the writings to you, that you may read 'em before we go?

WISEACRES. I'll be, in half an hour, at Ganaway's coffee house.

DASHWELL. I'll go and acquaint my wife I'm going out of Town, and meet you there.

[EXIT DASHWELL.]

WISEACRES. Mr. Alderman, you perceive that I intend my wife shall be no gossiper, nor wife of the times. I will marry her tomorrow morning in private, and she shall live retired and private, as she has been bred.

DOODLE. As you please for that. I'll but tell 'em within I am going out of Town about business, and follow you.

WISEACRES. We'll expect you.

[EXIT WISEACRES.]

DOODLE. I can't but laugh to think what sport the women will make with him, when they hear on't - my wife will make him mad.

[ENTER ARABELLA AND ENGINE, LAUGHING.]

DOODLE. Thou art very merry, wife, this morning. Prithee, what dost laugh at?

ARABELLA. Lord, husband! That your wife was but a fool, what a fine time would you have on't?

DOODLE. What, you overheard our discourse?

ARABELLA. We have been listening at the door this half hour.

ENGINE. Marry, there's a fine project - marry a fool!

ARABELLA. He had a fling at me in his discourse, but I'll be revenged if ever I can come to speak to his silly wife - I'll read her a chapter of wisdom shall clear her understanding.

ENGINE. I am deceived if this Town do not teach her wit.

ARABELLA. This is not an age for the multiplication of fools in the female sex.

DOODLE. He has taken great pains to make her one.

ENGINE. How far off is this pattern of innocence?

DOODLE. But few miles from London; he marries her tomorrow morning, and brings her home.

ARABELLA. And you, husband, are to go upon this piece of gallantry, to fetch the lady?

DOODLE. He desired, and I have promised.

ARABELLA. Are we to expect you home at dinner?

DOODLE. No, we shall dine together at Exchange, there take coach. Well, wife, you shall see me again tomorrow - there's a kiss to remember me till my return. [KISSES HER] Adieu.

ARABELLA. Adieu, husband.

[EXIT DOODLE.]

A kiss! Slender diet to live upon. I have a mind to greater dainties, to feast in his absence upon lustier fare than a dull City-husband. Now, Engine, if I durst pursue my inclinations with the man you have so often heard me speak of -

ENGINE. A little variety, Madam, would be pleasant - always to feed upon Alderman's flesh is enough to cloy your stomach.

ARABELLA. But how, Engine - what contrivance to let him know it?

ENGINE. Madam, write to him.

ARABELLA. No, thou shalt go to him, thou hast a pretty way of speaking; I'll give thee some general hints, and leave it to thy management.

ENGINE. I'll do my part, I'll warrant you, Madam. If you like the gentleman, I'll secure you, the gentleman shall like you.

ARABELLA. Love is a doubtful voyage.

ENGINE. Yes, if the venture be in a leaky rotten bottom, or such a slug as your husband. But in such a well-built ship, so finely rigged as that you speak of, you run no risk at all.

ARABELLA. Well then, if he has stowage-room left for a heart, contract for mine.

ENGINE. Methinks I see him lie 'cross your hawser already.

ARABELLA. Come, wench, thy tongue runs, and we lose time.

ENGINE. I'll regain it in my expedition.

[EXEUNT.]

SCENE TWO

[RAMBLE'S LODGING.]

[ENTER RAMBLE AND TOWNLY.]

TOWNLY. Prithee, Ned Ramble, what makes thee so early a riser, after so late a debauch as we made last night?

RAMBLE. [FINGERING A *BILLET-DOUX*] I am pursuing an intrigue, a new mistress, Frank.

TOWNLY. An intrigue! Thou art always upon intrigues. I never knew any of your intrigues come to anything. There's no fellow in Town has been so baulked as thou hast, in all thy adventures. I never make it my business to look after women, and yet they sail in my way, and I am successful - whereas thou art always coursing 'em about, and when you are at the very scut of them, thou lovest 'em.

RAMBLE. The truth is, I have been unfortunate hitherto. I always meet with occasions, but never bring 'em to perfection; yet it is not my fault neither, for either my mistress jilts me, Fortune jilts me, or the Devil prevents me. I can never bring it to a home push.

TOWNLY. Therefore prithee leave hunting that difficult game, and learn of me to divert thyself with a bottle, leave enquiring where there's a pretty woman, and ask where the best wine is, take women as I do - when they come in thy way by accident; you'll never be successful so long as you make it your business. Love, like riches, comes more by fortune than industry.

RAMBLE. Perseverance will overcome destiny; I shall have good luck in the end.

TOWNLY. Well, pray tell me of this new amour.

RAMBLE. The new one! [KISSES THE *BILLET-DOUX*.] We have conversed together; I have bowed to her, kissed my hand to her, looked amorously on her, stood by her and sighed, whispered her 'cross the pew, and stole notes into her hand -

TOWNLY. This is a church lady then, some old countess or rich widow?

RAMBLE. She is a wife - young, pretty, and blooming as the Spring.

TOWNLY. Strange a man should find a mistress at church, that never goes to one.

RAMBLE. 'Tis true. I durst not pray against temptation, lest heaven should take me at my word. I had not been at church since my father's funeral, but for a sudden shower of rain that drove me into a church porch for shelter - and whilst I was standing there, came by this miracle of a woman, and wrought my conversion.

TOWNLY. What is her husband?

RAMBLE. A blockheaded City attorney, a trudging, drudging, cormudging, petitioning citizen, that with a little law and much knavery has got a great estate.

TOWNLY. Cuckold the rogue.

RAMBLE. By the inducement of her parents she married him against her inclinations, and now, nauseating her husband's bed, rises every morning by five or six, with a pretence to hear her lectures and sermons, and loathing his company at home, pretends all day to be at prayers, that she may be alone in her chamber.

TOWNLY. And that *billet* is from her?

RAMBLE. From her maid, from whom with a bribe I learn all this. It came this morning. You shall hear the contents.

[READS] “Sir, My Master is going out of Town, and I have worked upon my Mistress’s inclination to admit you this night. Be at your lodgings in the evening, and expect me to come and be your guide to the happiness you wish for. Yours in all zeal, Jane.”

[ENTER LANDLADY (OR SERVANT).]

LANDLADY. Sir, here’s a gentlewoman desires to speak with you in private.

RAMBLE. Bring her up.

[EXIT LANDLADY.]

Townly, let me beg your pardon, and desire you to step into the next room.

TOWNLY. Another love ambassadress; I’ll withdraw.

[EXIT TOWNLY.]

[ENTER ENGINE.]

RAMBLE. A good morrow to you, mistress.

ENGINE. The like to you, sir. My wish will be successful, since I bring you such good news.

RAMBLE. Pray come nearer. What is it, I pray, and from whom?

ENGINE. From a fair lady, sir. I hope we are private.

RAMBLE. Fear not; pray go on.

ENGINE. Pray wonder not, sir, at my forwardness, since it is to do a person service of such extraordinary merits as yourself.

RAMBLE. Now you compliment me. You have raised me to a wonderful expectation.

ENGINE. And yet when you have considered how accomplished a person you are, and how worthily you attract the eyes of the ladies, you will think it then no wonder at all that a lady of as great wit and beauty as any the City affords thinks you the most admirable person of your whole sex.

RAMBLE. Pray, who is this lady, whose thoughts are so favourable to me?

ENGINE. A rich alderman’s young wife, one that has been married above six months.

RAMBLE. Good!

ENGINE. She speaks so prettily in your praise, and has the tenderest sentiments in her thoughts for you.

RAMBLE. Very good.

ENGINE. And o’er whom you have such an ascendancy that could she be assured you were one would be secret, and with whom her reputation might be safe -

RAMBLE. She could love me - is it so?

SCENE TWO

ENGINE. It is indeed. And says, after such an assurance, it were no longer in her power to refuse you any favour could be expected from a woman.

RAMBLE. Thou pourest harmony in my ears. Take this gold to encourage thee.

[COINS PASS.]

Say, where is this obliging beauty - when shall I see her?

ENGINE. Her husband is this day gone out of town.

RAMBLE. Conduct me to her, and let me fall before her with humble adoration.

ENGINE. Not 'till night, that darkness may secure her reputation from the censure of prying neighbours. Be prudent, and approach with circumspection.

RAMBLE. But where, where is this blessing to be found?

ENGINE. These tablets I had from her; in those you will find her name with characters that will direct you to this beauty.

[PASSES TWO SLIM VOLUMES.]

RAMBLE. Pray favour me with some further knowledge of yourself, lest wanting opportunity to oblige, I should appear ingrateful.

ENGINE. My name is Engine, a domestic in her family, and she is pleased to make me her confidante.

RAMBLE. Let my interest still be your care, and if such small acknowledgments as these [COINS] can quit my score, I hope not to die your debtor.

ENGINE. Your servant, sir.

RAMBLE. Dear Mistress Engine, yours.

[EXIT ENGINE.]

RAMBLE. Now for her name, and place of habitation - where?! -

[LOOKS IN THE BOOK.] Oh, here - Mrs. Arabella, wife to Alderman Doodle!

[ENTER TOWNLY.]

TOWNLY. Ned, you must pardon my curiosity, I could not but listen, I heard all.

RAMBLE. That two appointments should happen at the same time, one to prevent the other! I resolve to attempt the other first, because I know the person; I am sure she pleases me. What perfections this has, are yet unknown to me, therefore with more ease neglected.

TOWNLY. Who is this woman, what's her name?

RAMBLE. Excuse me there, it is not like a gallant man to reveal a kind lady's name. That and her place of habitation are here set down in fair characters. Thus was the happy secret entrusted to me.

[BRIEFLY SHOWS THE TABLETS.]

TOWNLY. Ha! Let me but observe.

RAMBLE. Look no longer, 'tis not of your acquaintance.

TOWNLY. 'Tis the same! The woman is the person of all the world I most fancy.

RAMBLE. Is she very handsome?

TOWNLY. 'Tis her wit I admire. I have seen her often at plays. She has a delicate shape, and a tongue would charm a man.

RAMBLE. I now am more dissatisfied that one intrigue should cross the other!

TOWNLY. Since it so falls out, give me the directions, and I will go in your place.

RAMBLE. No, no, I'll keep two strings to my bow. If any accident cross one design, I have the other lady in reserve; and now I think myself secure above the malice of Fortune, and laugh at her former spite.

TOWNLY. For punishment, I wish thee the same curse I do to misers that hoard up gold, and would not part with any to save a man from starving.

RAMBLE. Alas, Frank Townly, I thought you could not be in love with anything but a bottle.

TOWNLY. Evil fates are boding o'er thy head, and so, churl, farewell.

RAMBLE. Spite of thy prophecy, meet me tomorrow morning, and I'll tell thee such pleasant stories of this night's joys, thou shalt for ever be converted from wine to women.

[EXIT TOWNLY.]

Women are miracles the gods have given,
That by their brightness we may guess at Heaven.

[EXIT RAMBLE.]

SCENE THREE

[A ROOM IN DASHWELL'S HOUSE. EVENING.]

[ENTER EUGENIA AND JANE.]

JANE. Madam, Mr. Ramble will be here presently.

EUGENIA. Had not you persuaded me, I should never have consented to his coming tonight in my husband's absence.

JANE. I vow to you, Madam, it grieved me to see how the poor gentleman sighed and looked pale, and watched all opportunities to see you, and how constantly he came to church, where, but for your sake, I dare swear, he would as soon have been hanged as come. I knew it was against your conscience to deny him.

EUGENIA. Ah! Were my husband but such a man, how happy a creature should I be. But I was forced to marry him to please my parents.

JANE. 'Tis then your turn to please yourself now with a gallant, to supply the defects of a husband. Troth, Madam, think no more of your husband, but of your gallant, the man who is this night come to your embraces. I'll warrant you, you'll not repent yourself tomorrow morning.

EUGENIA. If unexpectedly my husband should return -

JANE. No fear of that.

[KNOCKING.]

EUGENIA. Hark, somebody knocks, run to the door.

[ENTER LOVEDAY, MEANLY HABITED, IN BLACK.]

JANE. Who would you speak with, sir?

LOVEDAY. Is Mr. Dashwell within?

JANE. He is out of Town, and returns not till tomorrow.

LOVEDAY. Is his lady at home?

JANE. Yes - there she is.

EUGENIA. Your business, sir?

LOVEDAY. I have letters to your husband from his brother at Hamburg, the merchant, in which he recommends me to him for a servant, or at least a short entertainment in his family, till I have dispatched some business he is pleased to employ me in.

EUGENIA. [ASIDE] Jane, this is unlucky, what shall we do? His being in the house will put a restraint on our freedom tonight.

JANE. [ASIDE] No, Madam, I'll dispatch him to bed; do but you give order, and then let me alone.

EUGENIA. My husband will be in Town tomorrow, and then he will resolve you if he wants a servant. My house is not well provided of beds at present, you must be content with a lodging in the garret. Jane, take care to see him lodged. I am sleepy and will go to my chamber.

[EXIT EUGENIA.]

JANE. Come, sir, you have rid a long journey today, and may be weary, I'll show you to your chamber, there's a bed ready made, and a sack posset shall be brought up to you.

LOVEDAY. That shall suffice; but let me now request a glass of beer.

JANE. Pray, sir, sit down, you shall have that presently.

[EXIT JANE.]

LOVEDAY. How fair Eugenia looked; her beauty's still fresh and blooming. With how much joy in this short interview have I beheld those eyes, whose wounds I have borne so long. Her husband out of Town, and she alone. This had been a time - ha, what's that?

[LOOKING OFF] What's there? A table laid? Late as it is, here will be a supper! All this preparation cannot be for tomorrow, somebody is to come in the husband's absence! Eugenia pretends to be gone to bed, my company was unseasonable, to lodge me in the garret was policy.

[ENTER JANE, WITH BEER.]

JANE. Sir, here's a glass of drink.

[SHE STANDS OVER HIM WHILE HE DOWNS IT.]

LOVEDAY. I thank you, I was very dry.

JANE. Now, sir, if you please, I will take you to your chamber.

LOVEDAY. With all my heart, for I am very weary.

[ASIDE] 'Tis so, they relish not my company, and are for posting me supperless to bed, only to remove me out of the way.

[EXEUNT JANE AND LOVEDAY.]

[ENTER EUGENIA AND RAMBLE.]

EUGENIA. Come, sir, now come in here. Well, Mr Ramble, you see what influence you gentlemen have over us weak women.

RAMBLE. Oh my dear life, my joy, let me not answer thee, but in this language.

[KISS.]

EUGENIA. I ne'er thought I should condescend to admit you to my house in my husband's absence thus - what will you think of me?

RAMBLE. I'll think thee the kindest, lovingest, the dearest, and the best of thy whole sex; come, let us reserve our thoughts till anon, till I have thee in bed in my arms.

EUGENIA. Use your conquest with discretion, and put me not to my blushes. I confess I can deny you nothing, and 'tis too late now to retreat.

SCENE THREE

RAMBLE. Be not faint hearted, nor ashamed, now Fortune has blessed us with the opportunity; now let us be all rapture, all fire - kiss, hug and embrace, and never have done.

[ENTER JANE.]

JANE. Madam, supper is upon the table.

RAMBLE. Come, madam, let us prepare ourselves with meat and wine - yet make but a hasty meal of it, that we may the sooner come to that more delicious banquet that love has prepared for us.

EUGENIA. Have a care of feeding too heartily on love, 'tis a surfeiting diet, with which your sex is soon cloyed, and that is the reason you men seek variety so much.

[JANE DRAWS THE TABLE IN.]

RAMBLE. Fear not that now, for thou art a dish of all varieties that contains the best of everything, all the beauties of thy whole sex.

EUGENIA. Come, sir, sit down.

[THEY SIT DOWN AT TABLE.]

RAMBLE. Mistress Jane, oblige me with a glass of wine. Madam, this to your good health.

[DRINKS.] Fill the glass, and bring't to me again.

[DRINKS.] I drink you ladies' health. To you, madam! I am ecstasied with the thoughts of approaching bliss.

[KNOCKING AT THE DOOR.]

EUGENIA. Jane, run to the door, and see who knocks.

JANE. Who can it be, thus late?

[RUNS OUT AND BACK, OR CHECKS FROM WINDOW.]

EUGENIA. Pray heaven it be not my husband.

RAMBLE. No, no, Fortune will not be such an enemy to love.

[KNOCKING AGAIN.]

EUGENIA. Hark again.

JANE. Heavens, Madam, 'tis my Master.

EUGENIA. Jane, what shall we do?

RAMBLE. Cursed spite, where shall I hide?

[KNOCKING.]

EUGENIA. Heavens, how he knocks.

JANE. Go in there, sir. There! There!

[RAMBLE GOES IN.]

EUGENIA. Thrust in table and all, the wine too!

[TABLE AND ALL IS CONCEALED.]

Tell him I am at my prayers and would not be disturbed: get him up to bed.

JANE. Yes, Madam.

[KNOCKING.]

He'll beat down the door.

EUGENIA. Stay, where is my prayer book?

JANE. In the window, Madam.

[EXIT JANE.]

[EUGENIA SETTLES HERSELF TO READ UPON THE COUCH.]

[ENTER DASHWELL AND DOODLE, WITH JANE.]

DASHWELL. Is my wife in the parlour? We'll go in to her.

JANE. She is at prayers, and would not be disturbed.

DASHWELL. Let her pray anon, I have brought Mr. Alderman Doodle to see her. Wife, come, leave off praying, thou art always praying, lay by thy book.

EUGENIA. Oh, me. Husband, are you come home, indeed? I did not expect you tonight. Mr. Alderman, your humble servant.

DOODLE. Your servant, good Mrs. Dashwell.

EUGENIA. I hope your wife is well.

DOODLE. I left her well in the morning; she's not at her prayers, I'll warrant you, e'en a little of that serves her.

EUGENIA. Truly, I think I cannot spend my time better.

DASHWELL. Well, wife, prithee, what hast thou for our supper? We are very hungry, the fresh air has got us a stomach.

EUGENIA. Truly, husband, not expecting you home, I provided nothing; we made shift with what was left at dinner, there is nothing at all in the house.

DOODLE. Well, neighbour, now I have seen you home, I'll leave you.

DASHWELL. Nay, nay, stay and drink a glass of wine.

[ENTER LOVEDAY, WITH A LETTER.]

LOVEDAY. [ASIDE] This is a fit time for me to appear. I have observed all, and will startle 'em.

DASHWELL. Who is this?

EUGENIA. Oh my dear, I had forgot to tell you, this young man comes from your brother at Hamburg with recommendations to you.

SCENE THREE

LOVEDAY. Here's a letter from him, sir. I was just going to bed, but when I heard you come, I made bold to trouble you tonight, to know your pleasure.

DASHWELL. Jane, some wine.

[JANE GOES, AND RETURNS WITH WINE.]

EUGENIA. How did it happen, pray, that you all returned tonight?

[DASHWELL READS THE LETTER.]

DOODLE. Alderman Wiseacres and I heard upon th'Exchange of a business that will require our presence there tomorrow - therefore he resolved to bring his bride to Town tonight, and be married early in the morning.

EUGENIA. Is she come, then?

DOODLE. We left her and her aunt at the coach, Mr Wiseacres is come before to his house to provide for their reception. He has the oddest humours, he will have his bride call him Uncle.

EUGENIA. She is very young, I hear.

DASHWELL. [TO LOVEDAY] My brother gives you a very good general character, he speaks much of your fidelity and sober carriage, but names not any particular employment that you are fit for - pray what are you capable of?

LOVEDAY. I have been bred a scholar, taken some degrees at the University, I can write an account well.

DASHWELL. Very good. For my brother's sake I'll see to get you some employment.

LOVEDAY. I humbly thank you, sir.

[FALSE EXIT AND "AFTERTHOUGHT"]

One thing more let me tell you of my abilities. Whilst I was a scholar at Oxford, I studied a very mysterious art, and spent much time in the contemplation of magic, which the vulgar call the Black Art; for this I was expelled the University. I can perform something wonderful, yet without danger, and tomorrow, or any time when you and your lady are at leisure, I will show something of my skill for your diversion.

EUGENIA. Oh goodness, husband! I would not see conjuring for all the world, it is a naughty wicked thing. I shan't sleep tonight for thinking there is one in the house that knows the Black Art. Jane, be sure you lay my prayer book under my pillow tonight.

LOVEDAY. Fear not, lady, you shall have no hurt from me. It is very useful sometimes. I can by my Art discover private enemies, reveal robberies, help right owners to goods stolen or lost; to ships becalmed procure a wind shall bring 'em to the port desired, and the like.

DOODLE. I beg your pardon, I believe nothing of all this.

DASHWELL. I would you could help us to a good supper tonight, for I am damnably hungry.

DOODLE. Ay, and not stay the dressing of it.

LOVEDAY. That, sir, I'll do with all my heart.

DASHWELL & DOODLE. Can'st thou?

LOVEDAY. In a trice, the easiest thing of a hundred.

DASHWELL. Prithee do, then.

EUGENIA. Oh Lord, husband! What do you mean?

DASHWELL. Nay, nay, ne'er fright yourself, you'll see no such thing.

LOVEDAY. I'll warrant you a supper, sir.

DASHWELL. Say'st thou so? But let it be hot!

LOVEDAY. Hot - ay, sir.

DOODLE. It must needs be hot if it comes from the Devil.

EUGENIA. I hope he's not in earnest. For Heaven's sake, husband, let me be gone.

DASHWELL. No, no, sit down; come, begin.

LOVEDAY. Have patience, you shall see nothing to fright you. Silence, I pray -
Mephorbus, Mephorbus, Mephorbus! Thrice I have thee invoked, my familiar - Be thou assistant
straight to my desires, supply whate'er a hungry appetite requires. By all the powers of the Zodiac:
Aries, Taurus, Gemini, Cancer, Leo, Virgo, Libra, Scorpio, Sagittarius, Capricorn, Aquarius, Pisces.
Assist, ye Seven Planets too: Mars, Sol, Venus, Mercury, Luna, Dragon's Head, and Dragon's Tail.
Shed your auspicious influences, and to my charm give efficacious strength.

JANE. Oh, the Devil is coming, I smell brimstone already.

DASHWELL. Peace, you baggage, you have supped.

DOODLE. I begin to sweat for't. Would I were under the table, that the Devil mayn't see me if he comes.

LOVEDAY. Arlom, Gascodin, Adelphon, Eus, Eusticon, Olam, Amemnos. Thanks, Mephorbus. Now, sir,
you may prepare to fall to.

DASHWELL. Why, I see no meat; the Devil has failed you.

LOVEDAY. Let your servant open that door and draw in the table as it is furnished by the power of my Art.

JANE. [ASIDE] Ha! Was that his conjuring?

[JANE DRAWS OUT THE TABLE.]

DASHWELL. Wonderful, a table plentifully furnished! Good meat and wine; 'tis excellent, wife - Mr.
Alderman, fall to.

EUGENIA. Eat of the Devil's food?

LOVEDAY. Though it came by a supernatural means, yet it is no delusion; 'tis good substantial food, such
as nature and the bounty of Heaven afford to encourage you. See, I will fall to and eat heartily.

DASHWELL. Excellent fare, i'faith. Wife, fill me some wine; Mr. Alderman, my service to you; delicious
wine, too - Oh, rare Art. Sir, you are an excellent caterer.

EUGENIA. I could not have believed there was such power in Art, if I had not seen it.

JANE. Pray, Madam, fall to; the meal looks well.

SCENE THREE

EUGENIA. I'll venture.

DOODLE. Pray Heaven it digest well.

LOVEDAY. I warrant you, sir.

EUGENIA. [ASIDE] A witty knave, Jane, he resolved not to go supperless to bed.

DASHWELL. Here, sir, here's to you, and I thank you for our good cheer. But pray tell me, by what means was this food brought hither, and the table furnished - was it by the help of spirits?

LOVEDAY. It was done by a familiar that I have command of. If you please, I will show you him in human shape.

DASHWELL. Pray do, sir, that I may thank him.

EUGENIA. Oh, by no means, sir - what, husband, would you thank the Devil?

LOVEDAY. Will you eat of his meat and not thank him?

DOODLE. 'Tis something uncivil, I confess.

DASHWELL. Why, is't not the proverb? Give the Devil his due? Fear not.

LOVEDAY. I warrant you, lady, it shall be no harm to you; he is hereabouts invisible already.

EUGENIA. It can be no ill spirit sure.

LOVEDAY. Set the door wide open, that his passage may be free.

DASHWELL. Quick, Jane.

LOVEDAY. Mephorbus, that lurkest here, put on human shape, appear visible to our sight, and come forth in the likeness of a fine well-dressed gentleman, such as may please this lady's eye. Pass by, pay your reverence, and make your exit. Presto, I say be gone!

[ENTER RAMBLE, CROSSES THE STAGE, BOWS AND EXIT.]

EUGENIA. [ASIDE] Jane, step after him, and bid him not go far - you shall call him when my husband is in bed.

[ALoud] Go shut the door, Jane, for fear he should return.

JANE. Lend me your prayer book, to keep him off if he should turn upon me.

[EXIT JANE.]

LOVEDAY. So, madam, how did you like the spirit?

EUGENIA. It looked like a fine gentleman. Was it a devil?

DASHWELL. A kind of devil, a familiar; could you have laid him, wife?

[SHE LOOKS CURIOUSLY AT HIM.]

DOODLE. It was a mannerly devil too, he bowed as he passed by.

LOVEDAY. When spirits appear in human form and shape, they will be dealt with as really human.

DASHWELL. I apprehend.

DOODLE. Well, now I'll take my leave. I'll call as I go, and see if the bride be come yet, and then go home to my wife. Mr. Dashwell, good night - I thank you, and this good gentleman, for my good supper.

DASHWELL. Mr. Alderman, your servant.

[EXIT DASHWELL, EUGENIA, WITH DOODLE, SEEING GUEST OUT.]

LOVEDAY. So, my suspicions were not in vain and my curiosity of stealing downstairs to observe what passed tonight has procured a good supper, obliged the lady, and diverted the husband, for which I have thanks on all hands.

[DASHWELL, EUGENIA & JANE RETURN.]

EUGENIA. Sir, now I thank you. Your Art has obliged me, and you shall find it.

LOVEDAY. I am glad, madam, it was in my power to serve you.

EUGENIA. Jane, attend the gentleman.

JANE. This way, sir, if you please.

LOVEDAY. Good night, sir; good night, madam.

DASHWELL. Good repose to you, sir.

[EXIT LOVEDAY.]

An admirable fellow this, wife. Let's go to bed now.

EUGENIA. I'll say my prayers here below, because I won't disturb you.

DASHWELL. Jane, go lock fast the doors. Good night, wife.

EUGENIA. Good night; I'll come softly to bed, I'll not disturb you.

[EXIT DASHWELL.]

Jane, will Mr. Ramble be hereabout?

JANE. He'll hover near the door, 'till I call him in.

EUGENIA. Go you up, and give me notice when your Master is in bed.

JANE. [GIGGLES] Madam, I will.

[EXEUNT SEPARATELY.]

SCENE FOUR

[THE STREET BEFORE THE HOUSES OF WISEACRES, DASHWELL AND DOODLE. NIGHT.]

[ENTER RAMBLE.]

RAMBLE. Well, there it is! Here was one defeat of Fortune - but I would tempt her once more.

[PACES RESTLESSLY.] She bade me hover - I'll but take a turn to the street's end, t'allow the cuckold husband get him to sleep. ('Tis 'coming plaguey dark.)

[EXIT RAMBLE.]

[ENTER TOWNLY.]

TOWNLY. Ha, the moon's gone, and I can see nothing! Sure, that was Ramble - he's upon the scent of some new intrigue; if I could have met the rogue, he should not have 'scaped from me till he had drank his bottle. Hark, I hear a door open!

[ENTER JANE FROM DASHWELL'S HOUSE.]

JANE. Sir, sir, where are you?

TOWNLY. Somebody calls - what can this mean?

JANE. Where are you?

TOWNLY. 'Tis a woman's voice - here!

JANE. Where? Give me your hand.

TOWNLY. Here. Take hands.

JANE. My Master falls asleep already, snoring-ripe, and my lady bid me bring you in at once.

TOWNLY. Well, well.

JANE. She desires you will only whisper, for fear of being heard.

TOWNLY. [WHISPERS] No, no.

JANE. You must not stay long; therefore what you do, do quickly.

TOWNLY. Yes, yes!

JANE. Come, sir, softly.

TOWNLY. So here's a blind bargain struck up, but there's a woman in the case, and I cannot resist the temptation.

[EXEUNT INTO DASHWELL'S HOUSE. IMMEDIATELY THE DOOR SHUTS BEHIND THEM, ENTER RAMBLE, EAGERLY LOOKING THERE FOR HIS SUMMONS FROM JANE.]

RAMBLE. The door is fast still. I begin to fear.

[SIGHS.] To expect is painful, but a lover must have patience.

[ENTER AUNT, PEGGY.]

Ha! Who comes yonder! Gad, a most pretty creature.

PEGGY. Forsooth, Aunt, this is a most hugeous great place, here be a number of houses, Aunt.

AUNT. Ay, Peggy, and fine houses, when you see 'em by daylight.

PEGGY. Shan't I see 'em all tomorrow, forsooth, Aunt?

RAMBLE. A young country girl, just come to Town.

AUNT. Oh, you can't see all London in a week, forsooth.

PEGGY. Oh Leminy! Not in a week, Aunt? And does my Nuncle own all this town?

AUNT. All, Peggy? No, nor the King, God bless him - not half.

RAMBLE. She appears so simple, young, and innocent, and is so pretty, I cannot forebear speaking to her.
By your leave, old gentlewoman -

AUNT. How now, sir, who are you?

RAMBLE. A gentleman, and one that desires to be acquainted with you and this pretty little lady.

AUNT. Stand off; come away, child.

RAMBLE. Nay, I'll not part with this pretty hand yet.

AUNT. Shove him away, Peggy.

PEGGY. Oh, but forsooth, Aunt, he's a gentleman.

AUNT. Ay, but a London gentleman. Get thee from him, or he'll bite thee.

PEGGY. Deeds, sir, will you bite me?

RAMBLE. Bite thee! Not for a thousand worlds, yet methinks I could eat thee.

AUNT. Stand off, I say, stand off! Come away, child, or he'll devour thee.

RAMBLE. I would hug thee, kiss thee, give thee gold and jewels, make thee a little queen.

PEGGY. Oh, dear Aunt! Did you ever hear the like?

AUNT. Believe him not, he's a lying, flattering London varlet.

RAMBLE. Good gentlewoman, do not fright a young innocent thing thus. I intend her no harm. I only offer my service to wait on you to your lodgings; say pretty one, will you give me leave?

AUNT. Get you gone, I say, or I protest -

PEGGY. Aunt, don't beat the gentleman, he does me no hurt, he only squeezes my hand a little.

RAMBLE. Thy innocence has reached my heart.

SCENE FOUR

PEGGY. Indeed, I ha'n't done you no harm, not I.

RAMBLE. Thou art insensible of the wound thy eyes have made.

PEGGY. Wound! Oh dear, why you don't bleed?

RAMBLE. Oh, 'tis inwardly!

PEGGY. Aunt, I warrant you one of your pins has scratched him.

AUNT. Break from him, forsooth, or he'll bewitch thee.

[ENTER WISEACRES AND DOODLE.]

WISEACRES. No, pray don't leave me yet - I wonder they are not come.

DOODLE. Well, I'll stay a little.

AUNT. Yonder comes your uncle. Od's me, he'll knock us all on the head. Come away, come away!

RAMBLE. Ha, let me kiss thy hand first; to part from thee is death.

WISEACRES. Ha - what do I see?

RAMBLE. Adieu, sweet innocence.

WISEACRES. Men already buzzing about her, how comes this?

DOODLE. Where there is meat in summer, there will be flies.

WISEACRES. I say how comes this?

AUNT. A rude royster here, would stop us in the street whether we would or no.

RAMBLE. [ASIDE] Oh, you old crony.

PEGGY. Don't make my Nuncle angry, Aunt, he did but hold me by the hand.

WISEACRES. How - let a man touch you? Oh monstrous, monstrous! Did not I warn you not to let a man speak to you?

PEGGY. Oh, but he was a gentleman, and my Aunt told me I must make a curtsy to gentlefolks, deeds, Nuncle.

DOODLE. Be not so passionate, she could not help it.

WISEACRES. I must seem angry to make her afraid for the future.

RAMBLE. I'll step aside, and watch where they go.

PEGGY. I did not know but it might be the King, they say he is a fine man, Nuncle.

WISEACRES. This was a night-walker, a spy, a thief, a villain; he would have murdered thee, and ate thee.

PEGGY. Oh grievous! I am glad you came then, Nuncle. He said indeed he could eat me.

AUNT. Ay, and so he would if I had not been here - at London they get young folks and bake 'em in pies.

PEGGY. Oh, sadness!

DOODLE. Never did I see one so simple.

WISEACRES. What made you stay so long?

AUNT. It was so late we could not get a coach in Southwark, and were forced to come on foot.

PEGGY. Oh, Nuncle, we come o'er a bridge where there's a huge pond.

WISEACRES. Peggy, come give me your hand, Peggy, and come your ways, or we shall have you eaten before we can get you in-a-doors - and 'tis grown pesky dark - here, here - this way - so, so, get you in, get you in.

[EXEUNT WISEACRES, PEGGY AND AUNT, INTO WISEACRES' HOUSE.]

RAMBLE. Eugenia's door fast *still*. 'Tis now damnable late. Will not the cuckold sleep? Well - patience yet. Hark! The door opens.

[ENTER TOWNLY AND EUGENIA IN THE STREET, EMBRACING. JANE HALF OUT, HOLDING THE DOOR.]

TOWNLY. Dear, kind, sweet creature.

EUGENIA. Go, you must not stay any longer now, 'tis dangerous.

RAMBLE. I heard a man's voice.

TOWNLY. When shall I be thus blessed again?

EUGENIA. Often, if you be discreet.

RAMBLE. Ha!

TOWNLY. I could live an age in thy arms, this was so very short.

EUGENIA. Ere long we'll find whole hours of pleasure.

[SHE KISSES HIM.]

[EXIT EUGENIA.]

RAMBLE. Am I jilted then, after all? Have at you! [HE DRAWS, AND RUNS AT TOWNLY.]

TOWNLY. Ha, who's there?

RAMBLE. Traitor, draw, and fight!

TOWNLY. Hold! Is that Ramble's voice I hear, in a roar? Art thou turned night-hawk, Ned?

RAMBLE. Ha, Townly? [PUTS UP HIS WEAPON.]

TOWNLY. Ned Ramble! What a plague did you mean?

RAMBLE. To have killed you, had you not been my very good friend.

TOWNLY. Prithee, next time give me leave to make my will.

RAMBLE. How came you here?

TOWNLY. By the wheel of Fortune, I guess I am fallen upon some of thy intrigues; prithee, who was this wench, with whom I have had so sweet a satisfaction?

SCENE FOUR

RAMBLE. I perceive your innocence by your ignorance. Come this way, farther from the house. 'Twas one of my two intrigues. I beat the bush, but thou hast caught the bird.

TOWNLY. I only shot flying. Next time she'll be your game.

RAMBLE. Curse on all ill luck.

TOWNLY. I told you in the morning Fortune would jilt you.

RAMBLE. She has in this. But I have another design in store. Come, let us walk together.

TOWNLY. I have company staying for me at the tavern.

RAMBLE. I am in haste too. I would see what luck I have with my other mistress. Come.
I find we can make no prosperous voyage in love
Till Fortune, like to Woman, will be kind.
Woman's the tide, but Fortune is the wind.

[EXEUNT.]

SCENE FIVE

[A ROOM IN DOODLE'S HOUSE.]

[ENTER ARABELLA IN HER NIGHTGOWN AND SLIPPERS, AND ENGINE.]

ARABELLA. I am concerned at this mistake, which was occasioned by the orange seller at the theatre; she thought I had meant Ramble when I asked her who Townly was, for they are constant companions.

ENGINE. Such mistakes are often when people are in company.

ARABELLA. Suppose I should tell him 'tis a mistake, and that he is not the man? I have no aversion to his person, and if I had never seen that Townly, I should have liked him extremely.

ENGINE. E'en resolve to go forward now, you'll like him better tomorrow morning, I warrant you.

ARABELLA. Well, if he press very hard, and I find I cannot come handsomely off...

ENGINE. Whist! He's coming, Madam.

[ENTER RAMBLE.]

RAMBLE. What, madam, not in bed yet?

ARABELLA. Is it late, sir?

RAMBLE. Oh, very late; to bed, to bed. Mistress Engine, pray help me to a cap or a napkin.

[EXIT ENGINE.]

ARABELLA. What mean you, sir?

RAMBLE. Faith, to go to bed too.

ARABELLA. You'll go home first?

RAMBLE. Devil take me if I do.

ARABELLA. What mean you, then?

RAMBLE. To stay and sleep with you.

ARABELLA. With me?

RAMBLE. Even so.

ARABELLA. Whether I will or no?

RAMBLE. That's e'en as you please; if you are as willing as I, 'tis so much the better.

ARABELLA. Sure you are but in jest.

RAMBLE. 'Gad, in as good earnest as ever I was in my life. Come, madam, act not against your conscience, I know how matters go. You are a fine, a young, brisk, handsome lady, and have a dull dronish husband without a sting. I am a young active fellow fit for employment, and egad I know your wants, therefore come, madam, come! Your night-dress becomes you so well, and you look so very tempting, I can hardly forbear you a minute longer. Let me not lose a minute of this blessed opportunity.

SCENE FIVE

ARABELLA. I could chide you severely now, for your ill opinion of me - but I am very sleepy and must go to bed, therefore pray be gone.

RAMBLE. But I shan't leave you.

ARABELLA. Why, what do you intend to do?

RAMBLE. To follow you.

ARABELLA. Whither?

RAMBLE. To your chamber.

ARABELLA. For what?

RAMBLE. To hug, kiss, and come to bed to you.

ARABELLA. I'll see what you dare do.

RAMBLE. I'll dare if I die for 't.

ARABELLA. Take notice then, thou desperate, resolute man, that I now go to my chamber, where I'll undress me, go into my bed, and if you dare to follow me, kiss, or come to bed to me, I'll lay thee breathless and panting, and so maul thee, thou shalt ever after be afraid to look a woman in the face.

RAMBLE. Stay and hear me now: Thou shalt no sooner be there but I'll be there; kiss you, hug you, tumble you, tumble your bed, tumble into your bed, down with you, and if at last you do chance to maul me, 'gad, you shan't have much reason to brag in the morning - and so, angry, threatening woman, get thee gone and do thy worst.

ARABELLA. And, sir, do you your best. Adieu.

[EXIT ARABELLA.]

[ENTER ENGINE.]

ENGINE. Well, here is like to be fearful doings, here's heavy threatening on both sides.

RAMBLE. I long till the skirmish begins.

ENGINE. I'll go in and help her to bed, she has nothing but her nightgown to slip off.

RAMBLE. Best of all; I'd fain have her at my mercy.

ENGINE. Oh, sir, have no mercy on her, she'll not complain of hard usage, I warrant you.

RAMBLE. Go thy ways, bonny girl.

[EXIT RAMBLE.]

ENGINE. Let me see, what has my pains-taking brought me in since morning - one, two, three and four guineas - when should I have got so much honestly in one day? Well, this is a profitable profession, and in us that wait on ladies, the scandal is hid under the name of confidante, or woman. I would sooner choose to be some rich lady's woman, than many a poor lord's wife. This employment was formerly styled bawding and pimping, but our age is more civilized.

[EXIT ENGINE.]

[ENTER TWO BAD BOYS IN THE STREET, TOSSING A LIGHTED LINK BETWEEN THEM.]

FIRST BAD BOY. [SEIZING THE LIGHT AND GAZING INTO THE FLAME] Tom - a frolic!
[MAKES THE TORCH DANCE, AND BANGS ON HOUSEHOLD DOORS, SHOUTING]
Fire! Fire! Fire!

[SECOND BAD BOY JOINS IN, AND THEY RUSH ONWARDS AND OFFSTAGE, NOISILY. FOR A MINUTE WE HEAR THEIR 'KNOCK DOWN GINGER' DOOR BANGING, GROWING FAINTER.]

[N.B. THE BAD BOYS SEQUENCE COULD GO AT THE BEGINNING OF THIS SCENE IF PREFERRED, PERHAPS FOR MORE CONVENIENT DOUBLING.]

[THEN SUDDENLY A MUCH NEARER KNOCKING.]

ENGINE. [RUNS ON.] Hark!

[ENGINE OPENS HOUSE DOOR.]

[ENTER DOODLE.]

DOODLE. Where are you here?

ENGINE. Ha!

[RUNS TO THE CHAMBER DOOR AND SEEMS TO SPEAK AS REJOICING.]

My Master! Oh Lord, Madam, here's my Master, here's my Master, here's my Master, my Master's come.

DOODLE. Why are the doors open at this time of night?

ENGINE. My Master, Madam, my Master's come! Oh lemminy, my Master, my Master.

DOODLE. Well, well, are you mad? I say: why were the doors left open thus late?

ENGINE. I was standing at the door, and my lady called on a sudden - I am so glad you are come home, sir - Madam, here's my Master - here's my Master.

DOODLE. Rogues might have come in and have robbed the house.

ENGINE. My Mistress has been so wishing all the night you would come - Sir, sir, Madam, here's my Master.

[ENTER ARABELLA, RUNS AND HUGS HIM ABOUT THE NECK.]

ARABELLA. Oh, my dear dear dear dear, art thou returned?

DOODLE. I have been come to Town a great while.

ARABELLA. Oh, my dear dear dear.

ENGINE. Hist.

[ENGINE BECKONS TO RAMBLE TO SLIP BY - HE COMES STEALING OUT, DOODLE TURNS AND HE SLIPS BACK AGAIN.]

DOODLE. I am so sleepy.

SCENE FIVE

ARABELLA. Oh, you are a naughty hubby, you have been a great while in Town, and would not come home to me before -

DOODLE. Dear, I'll be going to bed.

ARABELLA. Ay, but you shall kiss me first, here 'tis your own wife.

[SHE HUGS HIM AGAIN.]

ENGINE. Hist, hist.

[ENGINE BECKONS TO RAMBLE TO COME OUT.]

ARABELLA. Kiss, kiss me heartily. Oh my hubby, dear, dear, dear hubby.

ENGINE. Hem - em - ah.

[RAMBLE COMES OUT, AND RETREATS AGAIN.]

DOODLE. So so; wife, prithee be quiet - I am so weary, and thou stand'st hugging me; prithee let me go to bed.

ARABELLA. Engine, let us go see what's in the house for your Master to eat.

DOODLE. I have supped already, wife.

ARABELLA. It may be a great while since - come, Engine.

DOODLE. No, just now at Mr. Dashwell's.

ARABELLA. And how far went dear to day?

DOODLE. A few miles.

ARABELLA. And what time came you back?

DOODLE. Two hours ago - Prithee, wife, thou stand'st asking me so many questions.

ARABELLA. Untie your Master's shoes the while.

DOODLE. No no, leave your fiddling, give me my cap and nightgown.

ARABELLA. Engine, run into the chamber and fetch 'em.

DOODLE. No matter, we'll go in.

[EXIT ENGINE.]

ARABELLA. Well, dear, remember this, you are come home and won't make much of me.

[SINGS:] I have a husband, but what of that? He neither loves me nor my little cat;
The cat gets a mouse and with it does play. But my husband ne'er minds me all the long day -

DOODLE. Prithee wife, thou art so troublesome.

ARABELLA. [SINGS] There was a lady loved a swine, honey quoth she. Pig-hog, wilt thou be mine,
honey quoth he - . Husband, you loved to see me merry formerly.

DOODLE. Yes, wife, but I am so sleepy tonight.

[ENTER ENGINE.]

ENGINE. Sir, there's none of your gown in the chamber.

DOODLE. Stay, now I think on't, 'tis in my counting-house. Go to bed, wife, I'll undress me there, and come to you.

[EXIT DOODLE.]

ENGINE. So, he's gone.

ARABELLA. Fox, fox, come out of your hole.

[ENTER RAMBLE.]

RAMBLE. I am glad the enemy's drawn off a little - I was damnably afraid of his coming into the chamber.

ARABELLA. I did all I could that you might slip by.

RAMBLE. I had best make haste out now lest he return.

ENGINE. Hark, Madam, I heard my Master lock the door, and ten to one but he has taken the key out.

ARABELLA. Run and see.

[EXIT ENGINE.]

RAMBLE. If he has taken the key, which way shall I get out?

ARABELLA. Ah ha ha.

RAMBLE. Is all this but a laughing matter?

ARABELLA. I laugh at your faint heart.

[ENTER ENGINE.]

ENGINE. Madam, I looked down the staircase, and saw the key in my Master's hand; he has carried it into his counting house. What shall we do, Madam?

ARABELLA. You must e'en carry Mr. Ramble into your chamber, and let him sleep in your bed.

RAMBLE. What, the chamber within yours?

ARABELLA. Even so, sir, and thank your stars.

RAMBLE. 'Gad, I sweat with the thoughts on't.

ENGINE. And well may you, sir, for my Mistress is given to walk in her sleep, and if in the middle of the night she should chance to come to your bedside and take you betwixt sleeping and waking -

RAMBLE. Thou hast put a very pleasing fancy in my head. Say, madam, will you be so kind?

ENGINE. That may easily be. My Master will soon be asleep, as you may know by his snoring.

RAMBLE. But, should he wake, and miss her?

ARABELLA. To prevent that danger, when my husband snores, Engine, come you to my bedside softly, I'll rise, and you shall lie down in my place -

ENGINE. But, Madam, should the spirit move, and my Master awake and turn to me -

SCENE FIVE

ARABELLA. Fool, he'll find thee a woman, will he not?

ENGINE. Nay, now I have your leave and rather than spoil a good intrigue, I'll venture.

RAMBLE. An excellent device.

ENGINE. Go, get you both in, you into my chamber, sir, and you, Madam, slip into bed, and make as if you were fast asleep. You know my Master's custom, he's no sooner laid than asleep. And then I'll come softly, and pinch you by the arm to rise.

RAMBLE. Rare wench - here will be an intrigue.

ARABELLA. I am pleased with the thoughts on't.

ENGINE. Go, go, my Master's coming up - softly, softly.

RAMBLE. And I am pleased, to think, when your husband's a-snoring, how little he will dream of being a cuckold. Ha ha ha.

[EXEUNT ARABELLA AND RAMBLE.]

ENGINE. So, this business is retrieved again. I pity their case as it were my own. I hate to be baulked in my expectation, and of all things disappointments in love matters are the greatest curse. Here comes Mr. Alderman, who thinks nothing of all this.

[ENTER DOODLE, IN A CAP AND NIGHTGOWN.]

DOODLE. Is my wife in bed?

ENGINE. Softly, sir, she's asleep.

DOODLE. So, so, goodnight, make haste to bed.

[EXIT DOODLE.]

ENGINE. Go thy ways. Alderman, the cuckoo sung o'er thy head as thou returned'st to Town tonight. Oh, the vain imaginations of a husband, who thinks himself secure of a wife, when he's in bed with her! Oh, were I but a wife, what ways would I invent to deceive a husband, and what pleasure should I take in the roguery! But now I'll venture into my chamber, and watch the alarum of my Master's nose. Was it ever contrived before, that a husband himself should give his wife the sign to make him a cuckold?

[GOES TO THE DOOR.]

My Master snores already, and I hear my Mistress stirring.

[ENTER ARABELLA.]

Madam, he snores like a hog. In, in -

ARABELLA. Have a care of waking my husband.

ENGINE. Have you a care to make good use of your time, and don't stay too long.

[EXIT ARABELLA.]

ENGINE. So - thus far all goes well. Now must I undergo the severe penance, to lie by a man in vain - and sweating for fear he should wake, and find me out in the roguery. But I must venture now, let what will, happen. So happy go lucky and to bed gang I.

BAD BOYS. [WITHOUT] Fire, fire, fire!

ENGINE. Hark !

[KNOCKING AT THE DOOR.]

BAD BOYS. [WITHOUT] Fire, fire, fire!

ENGINE. Oh Heavens, we are undone - they cry Fire!

[ENTER ARABELLA.]

ARABELLA. O, Engine, don't you hear 'em knock and cry Fire!

VOICES. [WITHOUT] Fire, fire, fire!

[KNOCKING AT THE DOOR.]

ARABELLA. This will certainly waken him anon - Let us cry Fire too, and say I am just got up. Fire, fire, fire!

GENERAL CRY. [WITHOUT] Fire, fire!

[KNOCKING HARD.]

ARABELLA. Get up, husband, or you'll be burnt.

RAMBLE. What must I do now?

ENGINE. Don't stir out till my Master's gone.

[ENTER DOODLE.]

DOODLE. What's the matter - is the house on fire?

ENGINE. Don't you hear 'em knock, and cry Fire?

DOODLE. Run down and open the door.

ENGINE. Give me the key.

DOODLE. 'Tis below in my counting-house - come down, come down all. Oh, fire fire fire!

[EXEUNT ARABELLA, ENGINE, DOODLE, ALL CRYING FIRE.]

[ENTER RAMBLE.]

RAMBLE. What must I do now, venture to be discovered, or stay here and die a martyr to save a lady's honour? A pox of ill luck still. But here is no smell of burning, nor any smoke - sure the fire is not in this house. But I'll get to the stair head for fear, and watch my opportunity to escape unseen. 'Twas well I did not undress me.

[EXIT RAMBLE.]

SCENE SIX

[THE STREET, BEFORE DOODLE'S HOUSE.]

[ENTER DOODLE, ARABELLA AND ENGINE.]

DOODLE. Why, here's no fire, nor nothing like it - what could be the meaning of all this outcry and knocking?

ARABELLA. It was a false alarm.

DOODLE. Come, wife come in again; this was the roguery of some bad boys in their night frolics.

ARABELLA. I am glad it was no worse.

DOODLE. [GOING IN, MEETS RAMBLE COMING OUT]
Ha! Who's there - who's there?

RAMBLE. A friend, sir, a friend.

ARABELLA. Oh heavens, Ramble there.

DOODLE. A friend, sir? How got you into my house?

RAMBLE. I lodge here, just by, and hearing the outcry of Fire, came running over just as your door opened, and ran in to help you. But there's no fire within, as I see.

DOODLE. Sir, I thank you for your good will, but here's no need of help. All is safe.

RAMBLE. 'Twas doubtless the roguery of some boys. Sir, your servant, I wish you a good night.

DOODLE. Your servant, sir - Come, wife - Engine, lock fast the doors.

ENGINE. Yes, sir.

[EXEUNT DOODLE AND ARABELLA.]

RAMBLE. Now you have the key, open the door again by and by, and let me in; I'll be hereabouts.

ENGINE. Ah, you could not stay above, you a lover!

RAMBLE. Dear Mistress Engine, don't chide, but do what I request.

ENGINE. Well, I'll acquaint my lady. If she'll consent, I'll contrive to get you in again.

RAMBLE. And gold shall be thy reward.

[EXIT ENGINE, AND LOCKS THE DOOR.]

RAMBLE. Never was man, certainly, so crossed in love. In two attempts I have been defeated, enough to dishearten any ordinary lover - but it was the spite and malice of Fortune, and not want of love in the fair Arabella.

“Fortune's a jilt and often doth vary,
That fools may succeed and wise men miscarry.”
Therefore as long as she is willing I will be daring.

[ENGINE APPEARS AT THE WINDOW.]

ENGINE. Sir - Mr. Ramble -

RAMBLE. Have you prevailed?

ENGINE. My lady is willing, he is snoring in bed again, and you have the rarest opportunity - but my Master took the key again after I had locked the door, and we don't know how to get you in.

RAMBLE. Is there no hole nor window to creep at?

ENGINE. Just there below is a cellar window with a bar out, try if you can get in there - if you can, I will go down and show you up.

RAMBLE. I have found it here even with the ground.

ENGINE. Try if it be wide enough to get through.

RAMBLE. I believe it is.

ENGINE. I'll come down then and open the cellar door.

RAMBLE. I prithee do!

[ENGINE GOES FROM THE WINDOW.]

RAMBLE. I'll go heels forward because I don't know how far it is to the bottom. So, I am half through - it begins to grow straight - ha - the reward of lovers had need be sweet for which they endure so much - hum - 'tis damnably narrow now, but I'll give t'other squeeze - Oh, my guts - I can't get an inch further - what a spite is this - I must e'en come out again.

[ENGINE ABOVE AT THE WINDOW.]

ENGINE. Sir, sir - where are you?

RAMBLE. Here!

ENGINE. The cook-maid has locked the cellar door and taken out the key; I can't find it to get down, and if you do get in you can't come upstairs.

RAMBLE. I am half in, but if the door were open, could not get any farther. I must give o'er for this night, and think of a stratagem against tomorrow. Oh, oh - I am stuck fast; I can neither get quite in nor out! Now shall I be taken for a house breaker! Ha! I hear a casement open above.

[A WINDOW OPENS ABOVE, AND ONE EMPTIES A CHAMBER POT UPON HIS HEAD JUST AS HE LOOKS UP. HE SPLUTTERS.]

ENGINE. What's the matter, sir?

RAMBLE. One has quenched me with a stale chamber pot - faugh, how it stinks!

ENGINE. That roguish prentice at the next house does so almost every night.

RAMBLE. Never was lover in such a pickle.

ENGINE. Truly, this is enough to cool anybody's courage - but is't not possible for you to get out?

RAMBLE. Hum - aargh - All won't do, I am as fast as if I were wedged in.

ENGINE. Be silent, yonder comes somebody, I heard 'em tread.

SCENE SIX

[ENTER THE TWO BAD BOYS, CHUCKLING.]

FIRST BAD BOY. Who's there?

SECOND BAD BOY. Who's there?

RAMBLE. A friend.

FIRST BAD BOY. Who are you?

SECOND BAD BOY. What are you?

RAMBLE. A gentleman.

SECOND BAD BOY. Oh, a gentleman.

RAMBLE. Pray help me here, and lend me your hands.

FIRST BAD BOY. What, are you wounded, sir?

RAMBLE. No, no; coming late to my lodging, and loth to disturb the house with knocking I went to get in at the cellar window, and am stuck fast. Lend me your help to pull me out.

ENGINE. 'Tis true, as he tells you. Friends, help the gentleman out.

SECOND BAD BOY. Oh, nay then, mistress, we'll do our best.

FIRST BAD BOY. [WHISPERS] Hark you, Tom, a rare opportunity -

SECOND BAD BOY. Ay, ay, well thought on. But are you sure, sir, you can't get out?

RAMBLE. No, I have been struggling this while.

FIRST BAD BOY. Come, Tom, help the gentleman, take you hold of him by that arm -- Now, Tom!

[THEY TAKE HIS HAT OFF, CLAP ON ONE OF THEIR OLD SOOTY HATS ON HIS HEAD AND RUN AWAY. HIS FACE IS ALL BLACKED BY THEM.]

SECOND BAD BOY. Away!

[THEY DISAPPEAR.]

RAMBLE. Thieves, Thieves, Thieves!

ENGINE. What have they done, sir?

RAMBLE. The rogues, instead of helping me, are run away with my hat.

ENGINE. Oh, the rascals.

[CRIES OFF.]

Sir, sir, your crying out has raised the Watch, what will you do now?

RAMBLE. Now shall I be lodged in the Counter, and carried before a magistrate tomorrow, and all the City will ring of me by noon.

ENGINE. Give 'em good words, sir, I'll withdraw.

RAMBLE. Hist hist, I'll be silent, it may be they may pass by and not see me.

[THE BAD BOYS RETURN AS TWO GOOD MEN: WATCHMEN.]

FIRST WATCHMAN. Here, this way they cried 'Thieves'; follow, follow.

SECOND WATCHMAN. Ay, 'twas hereabouts.

FIRST WATCHMAN. Ha, here's one lies upon the ground.

SECOND WATCHMAN. Are you killed, sir, speak?

FIRST WATCHMAN. Ay, if you are dead, pray tell us.

RAMBLE. No, friends - I am not much hurt.

SECOND WATCHMAN. Ha, neighbour, this is some thief.

FIRST WATCHMAN. Ay, ay, a rogue, come to rob the house.

RAMBLE. Pray help me out, friends, and I'll tell you the truth.

SECOND WATCHMAN. Hold, there may be more rogues within. Before we take him out, let us knock and raise the house.

FIRST WATCHMAN. Ay, knock hard.

[THEY KNOCK HARD AT THE DOOR.]

SECOND WATCHMAN. Rise - thieves here - thieves in your house!

RAMBLE. Now shall I be disgraced.

FIRST WATCHMAN. Knock hard, knock hard.

[KNOCK AGAIN.]

[DOODLE ABOVE AT THE WINDOW.]

DOODLE. Hold - hold - are you mad - what's the matter there - friends?

SECOND WATCHMAN. We have caught a thief creeping in at your cellar window.

DOODLE. A thief!

FIRST WATCHMAN. We believe there are some of his rogue companions in the house already - let the door be opened, and we'll search.

DOODLE. Honest watchmen, I thank you. I'll come down to you presently.

RAMBLE. Pray, honest watchmen, help me out, for I am in a great deal of pain.

FIRST WATCHMAN. Come, we may venture to pull him out now.

SECOND WATCHMAN. Ay, come pull you by that arm. So pluck, pluck hard -

RAMBLE. Oh!

FIRST WATCHMAN. Nay, you must endure't.

RAMBLE. Zounds, my guts.

SCENE SIX

SECOND WATCHMAN. So, 'tis done; get up, sir.

[ENTER DOODLE, IN HIS NIGHTGOWN AND NIGHTCAP WITH A MUSKET.]

DOODLE. Come, where is this thief? Where are these rogues?

FIRST WATCHMAN. Here's one we found sticking fast betwixt the bars in the cellar grates.

DOODLE. Was he so, was he so, where are the rest?

SECOND WATCHMAN. We suppose there are some in the cellar that got in before.

DOODLE. Say you so, say you so; if they be there, I'll send 'em out.

[DOODLE STOOPS DOWN AND SHOOTS THE MUSKET OFF IN THE CELLAR WINDOW, FALLS BACKWARD, AND LETS IT FALL OUT OF HIS HAND.]

DOODLE. Oh neighbours, neighbours, oh!

FIRST WATCHMAN. You ha'n't hurt yourself, master, I hope?

SECOND WATCHMAN. Was it the recoil of the musket, beat you down?

DOODLE. Ay, ay, it was always a damned obstinate piece. Come, where is the rogue? Let me talk with him.

FIRST WATCHMAN. Whilst you examine him, we'll search below.

DOODLE. Ay, pray do. Engine, go below with the watchmen.

ENGINE. You must persuade 'em to let him go.

[EXEUNT FIRST WATCHMAN AND ENGINE.]

[ENTER ARABELLA.]

ARABELLA. What's the matter here, husband?

DOODLE. We have caught a thief, wife, breaking in at the cellar window.

ARABELLA. My dear, this is the gentleman that was so kind to come and offer his service tonight, when Fire was cried out.

DOODLE. Is't so? That cry of Fire was his plot to rob me, but that design failing, he has made this new attempt.

RAMBLE. Sir, I am a gentleman, and one that scorns such base actions. I'll tell you in short, sir, how I came to be fastened in your window.

DOODLE. Ay, that, sir.

RAMBLE. When I left you tonight, I walked down the street for a little air; returning, I was dogged by two or three rogues, who came behind me in the dark, and knocked me down. I, struggling with 'em, found my feet in at a cellar window, and crowded myself as far in as I could to escape from 'em, or at least, to secure my pockets.

DOODLE. Then you cried out 'Thieves' yourself?

RAMBLE. Yes, 'twas I.

DOODLE. How came you so disguised, and your face blacked, and that hat upon your head?

RAMBLE. The rogues that took mine clapped this on to muzzle me, and they blacked my face too. The rogues were chimney sweepers, or some that went in that disguise to rob.

ARABELLA. 'Tis very likely, husband

DOODLE. Ay, so 'tis, and if nobody be found in my house, I'll release you.

[ENTER ENGINE, AND FIRST WATCHMAN.]

FIRST WATCHMAN: We can find nobody, sir.

DOODLE. Well, sir, your servant then. Watchmen, see the gentleman home, and call tomorrow, and I'll give you something to drink.

RAMBLE. Sir, good night to you; I am sorry my misfortunes occasioned this disturbance.

ARABELLA. Lord, sir, that your mistress was but here in my place to see you now.

RAMBLE. I am not the first unfortunate lover; I'd say it happened to me for her sake, coming to see her.

ARABELLA. She could not choose but love you for such a piece of knight errantry, and take you about the neck and kiss you.

RAMBLE. Not till I had washed my face, fair lady.

ARABELLA. At least, sir, let your picture be drawn in this posture, to present to her, and write underneath "The Wandering Black Knight".

DOODLE. Dear, you are too bold with the gentleman.

RAMBLE. I am glad my afflictions yield any divertisement. Another time it may be my turn to laugh; I confess I am a little out of countenance now.

ARABELLA. Fie, fie, methinks a man of your complexion should not blush at anything.

DOODLE. Pray excuse her, sir, my wife's a merry prating wag -

RAMBLE. I like her ne'er the worse.

DOODLE. Good night, sir. Good night, neighbours.

RAMBLE. Your servant, sir. Good night, Mistress Magpie.

ARABELLA. Chimney sweep - Boh.

DOODLE. Come, wife - you are a little too severe with the gentleman.

[EXEUNT DOODLE, ARABELLA, AND ENGINE.]

RAMBLE. Come, gentlemen, forward to my lodging - this way -

[ENTER TOWNLY, SINGING.]

FIRST WATCHMAN. Who goes there?

TOWNLY. [SINGS] "You are the son of a whore - "

RAMBLE. 'Tis Townly, drunk. 'Tis a friend of mine.

SCENE SIX

TOWNLY. Who the devil art thou? Ramble! What a pox dost thou do thus, blackened like the Prince of Darkness?

RAMBLE. Misfortunes, Frank, misfortunes.

TOWNLY. Thou art an unseasonable blockhead, Ned, to go a-masquerading thus.

FIRST WATCHMAN. The gentleman has been knocked down, and robbed, sir.

TOWNLY. Ay, neighbours, that comes of whoring.

RAMBLE. Hold your tongue, you'll make a discovery. I confess, I was about the other intrigue I told you of.

TOWNLY. And the husband came, and you were forced to creep up the chimney to get away. This comes of whoring still. Hereafter, Ned, be ruled by me, leave lewd whoring, and fall to honest drinking. You see I am not turned conjurer, nor look like one that had been studying the Black Art - wine don't disguise a man half so much as whoring, Ned.

RAMBLE. Come, prithee go home. Watchmen, forward - this gentleman and I lodge in the same house.

[EXEUNT THE GOOD MEN.]

TOWNLY. Well, Ned, fare thee well; to tell the truth, I am a little ashamed of your company at present. I am sorry to leave my friend in affliction.. But this comes of whoring, Ned, this comes of your whoring.

[EXIT TOWNLY]

RAMBLE. Hang him! Let the tyrant go. 'Twill be my turn to insult one of these days.

[EXIT RAMBLE.]

INTERVAL

SCENE SEVEN

[RAMBLE'S LODGING.]

[ENTER TOWNLY WITH RAMBLE.]

TOWNLY. If ever was a more unfortunate adventure: the husband unexpectedly to come home when you were going to bed to his wife, a false alarm of fire when she was coming to you, sticking fast in a window, there to be showered with a chamber pot, robbed, taken by the Watch, suspected to be a thief, the house alarmed, the husband see you, your mistress hear you - in all your afflictions, how truly may'st thou sing 'Fortune my foe'.

RAMBLE. I could curse my stars.

TOWNLY. They will still shed their malicious influence; make your court to the bottle, Ned, to the bottle.

RAMBLE. [WITH A LETTER] I would take your counsel and forswear all womankind, but for this hope I have to bring one of these two designs to perfection.

[OPENS LETTER.] From Eugenia.

TOWNLY. Ah, the Devil's coming abroad again to hinder your conversion.

RAMBLE. Yet harken.

[READS] "SIR, My husband will be from home all this morning, I am very desirous to be informed the particulars of last night's misfortune; curiosity forces me, in spite of blushes, to give you this invitation. Enter at the back door without knocking, if you meet not Jane below, come directly upstairs."

Good! Frank, is not here temptation now? Is it to be resisted, think you? What can hinder now?

TOWNLY. The old Devil may dance again.

RAMBLE. Frank Townly, give me thy hand. If I fail now, I will be thy convert for ever.

TOWNLY. Upon those terms I consent to part with thee - adieu.

RAMBLE. Adieu. Now you shall see me return triumphant.

[EXEUNT.]

SCENE EIGHT

[A ROOM IN DASHWELL'S HOUSE.]

[ENTER EUGENIA AND JANE.]

EUGENIA. Jane, have you sent my letter?

JANE. Yes, Madam, but the messenger is not returned.

EUGENIA. It was a very strange accident last night, I can't imagine how it came about.

JANE. Mr. Ramble, when he comes, will inform you all.

EUGENIA. Jane, be you about the door below, and watch for the answer or his coming.

[EXIT JANE.]

EUGENIA. Moreover, I do not yet comprehend the meaning of this stranger who raised the spirit. What made him so curious to spy into secrets of the family the first night of his coming? Here he comes now.

[ENTER LOVEDAY.]

LOVEDAY. Madam, good morrow to you. I have watched your husband's going out, to get an opportunity to speak with you in private. Nay, blush not, madam, at anything that passed last night; what knowledge I have gathered of your secrets lies buried in this breast. Look well on me; though in disguise, do you not know me?

EUGENIA. Know you!

LOVEDAY. Am I not like one that once loved you, and to whom you often said you could never love any other man? Is Loveday so lost in your remembrance?

EUGENIA. Loveday, is it you? Forgive my excess of wonder; your growth and the smallpox have so altered you.

LOVEDAY. My heart is still the same, and I wish yours were so too.

EUGENIA. Be assured, Loveday, I can never hate the man I once loved so much.

LOVEDAY. How young and innocent were we in our first loves, and all our vows sincere - but time and absence has effaced them quite. Oh, Eugenia, 'tis death to me to see you, and not to see you mine.

EUGENIA. Speak not too much, my Loveday, lest you again raise the flame which was never quite extinct, for still it lies hot and glowing at my heart - But tell me, why came you in this disguise, and with pretence to be a servant?

LOVEDAY. When I returned from travel, I heard the fatal news of your marriage, but excuse you because your family misled you, and I was absent.

EUGENIA. That was our parents' plot to divide our affections.

LOVEDAY. Well, Eugenia, though you are married, and your person is your husband's, I claim a share in your affections. Since wholly I cannot enjoy you, allow me what part you can. I cannot live without your kindness, and since your inclinations to a gallant are partly privileged by your marriage, I claim that title.

EUGENIA. I confess I once loved you, nor had my affections ever abated - be you discreet, and I cannot be unkind.

LOVEDAY. Blessed Eugenia!

EUGENIA. But why came you in this disguise?

LOVEDAY. To get admittance into your house.

EUGENIA. How came you by that letter of recommendation from my husband's brother?

LOVEDAY. From a young man that had been his servant at Hamburg. Coming in the same ship together, I learnt what provision he had made for his reception here. I received him into my own service, took this letter from him with design to personate him here - which has succeeded so fortunately, as once more to introduce me to the presence of my dear long-loved Eugenia.

EUGENIA. How shall I recompense this constancy?

LOVEDAY. Love is the best reward of love. I cannot long remain in this disguise, for I must appear to my friends, who expect my arrival every day; therefore let slip no opportunity may make us blessed.

EUGENIA. My dear Loveday.

LOVEDAY. Now the hour is inviting; your husband abroad, nobody to observe or restrain our desires... Say - shall we now? Blush not, nor turn thy head into my bosom, but to thy chamber, my dear.

EUGENIA. You have prevailed, and I have power to refuse you nothing. Retire in there, and expect my coming. I will only give some necessary orders to my maid, and come to you presently.

LOVEDAY. My dear soul, make haste, for love has but a short time to reap the harvest of many years.

[EXIT LOVEDAY.]

EUGENIA. I must contradict my orders to Jane, lest I be surprised by Mr Ramble. His coming now is to be avoided as well as my husband's -

[ENTER JANE.]

Oh, Jane, if Mr. Ramble come, I will not see him. I will tell you my reasons another time... Whither are you going?

JANE. Into your chamber, to make your bed.

EUGENIA. No, no, stay. I'll go to bed again for an hour.

JANE. I'll lay it smooth then for you.

EUGENIA. Hold, don't go in, go down, and remain below till I call you, but watch my husband's coming - be as diligent to give me notice as if Mr. Ramble were here.

JANE. Yes, Madam.

[EXIT EUGENIA.]

SCENE EIGHT

JANE. What can the meaning of this be? Is he in her chamber already? It must be so by her not letting me go in; he slipped upstairs whilst I was absent! This is but a sudden fit of modesty in her. I shall know all anon.

[EXIT JANE]

SCENE NINE

[EUGENIA'S BED CHAMBER.]

[LOVEDAY AND EUGENIA IN THE BED CHAMBER, HE UNBUTTONED,
SITTING UPON THE BEDSIDE.]

LOVEDAY.. Come to my arms, dear kind creature. Thus could I look, and kiss, and hug, for ever. Oh! I am in an ecstasy of joy.

[KNOCKING.]

EUGENIA. Somebody knocks at the door! Who's there?

JANE. [WITHOUT] Madam, my Master is below, and just coming up to you.

EUGENIA. Oh, good wench, run down and stop him a little.

JANE. He's coming upstairs now.

LOVEDAY. Where shall I hide myself?

EUGENIA. Here, in the maid's chamber... The door's locked, and the key out!

LOVEDAY. Ne'er a closet in the room?

EUGENIA. No, sir, here, here, cover yourself in the bed. I'll draw the curtains round you.

LOVEDAY. Oh, anywhere!

EUGENIA. So, now for my book and a cushion, and to my devotions.

[SHE COVERS HIM IN THE BED, SHUTS THE CURTAINS, AND SITS BY THE
BEDSIDE, AS READING.]

[ENTER DASHWELL AND JANE.]

DASHWELL. Come, wife, prithee lay by thy book; I did never see the like of thee, thou art always reading one good book or another.

EUGENIA. I had just done, husband, and was coming down that Jane might clean the room. Come, will you go below?

DASHWELL. No, prithee stay a little, wife. I came only to see thee, and tell thee the news the bride and bridegroom are come from church. What luck Mr. Wiseacres will have, I know not - 'tis such a match! Methinks the bride is more fit to play with a puppy-dog than to have a husband.

EUGENIA. And who was there at the wedding?

DASHWELL. Only Alderman Doodle and myself, and an old woman the bride calls Aunt.

[AMOROUSLY] Wife, come hither, wife, prithee, wife, come - Jane, go down and fetch me my tobacco box.

JANE. Lord, sir, you won't take tobacco here, in my Mistress's chamber?

SCENE NINE

DASHWELL. Eh, pooh, pish - here, here, take the key of my counting house, and fetch the packet of letters that lies in the window.

JANE. You know, sir, I could never open that scurvy door in my life.

DASHWELL. Pox of this dull wench - she has put me by; I shan't have such a mind again this month. Well, wife, I'll leave thee, I must go and dine with 'em, I promised 'em not to stay. Fare thee well, I'll come and see you before night.

EUGENIA. As you please, husband.

[EXIT DASHWELL.]

EUGENIA. Jane, go down and stay below.

JANE. Yes, Madam.

[ASIDE] Sent away! I can see nobody. What can the matter be? I shall find it out.

[EXIT JANE.]

[EUGENIA UNCOVERS LOVEDAY.]

EUGENIA. His absence never was more wished. Are you not in a sweat, sir?

LOVEDAY. I am almost smothered with the clothes. I lay so still I durst scarcely breathe. If he had proceeded in his 'kindness' to you, I should have had a fine time on't.

EUGENIA. He's never very troublesome.

LOVEDAY. Is he quite gone, think you?

EUGENIA. Stay, lie still a little, I'll look out at window and see if he be gone forth.

LOVEDAY. Do, let all be secure - and then, Eugenia, let us bed with all the eager haste that ever lovers made.

EUGENIA. Hark, I think I hear him coming upstairs again.

LOVEDAY. Then, like a snail, I will draw in my horns once more.

EUGENIA. Shut, shut the curtain.

[LOVEDAY HIDES AGAIN.]

[ENTER RAMBLE FOLLOWED BY JANE.]

JANE. Hold, sir, hold, you must not go in.

RAMBLE. You are mistaken, Mistress Jane. I had a letter from her, she sent for me.

JANE. But, sir, my Master -

EUGENIA. Who is that, Jane - Mr. Ramble?

RAMBLE. 'Tis I, madam, your humble servant.

EUGENIA. Leave us, Jane.

[EXIT JANE.]

RAMBLE. I received your letter, kissed it a thousand times, and made what haste I could to obey your summons.

EUGENIA. Things are altered since. My husband -

RAMBLE. He's safe, madam; I saw him go out.

EUGENIA. He will be back again immediately.

RAMBLE. I heard him tell a servant as he went forth that he should not return till evening.

EUGENIA. I am sure he will not stay long; let me beg you therefore to shorten your visit.

RAMBLE. You seem to drive me hence - do you repent you sent for me?

EUGENIA. No, sir, but I was so scared last night, that I dare not run too great a hazard - wherefore if you love me, or ever hope for my kindness, go away now for fear of a mischief.

RAMBLE. What, leave you already, when you sent for me?

EUGENIA. By that you see my kindness, were it convenient - therefore pray go, for that young man who conjured is still in the house, and should he chance to see you again -

RAMBLE. I dare refuse nothing, but methinks so fair an opportunity should not be lost.

DASHWELL. [WITHOUT] Jane, Jane, where are you?

EUGENIA. Undone, that's my husband's voice, coming upstairs.

RAMBLE. I'll under the bed.

EUGENIA. You can't, it's too low.

RAMBLE. I'll into't then.

EUGENIA. Hold, no, no, my husband's come home to bed, he's not well.

JANE. [WITHOUT] Have a care, sir, have a care.

EUGENIA. Draw your sword, be angry, threaten, swear you'll kill -

RAMBLE. Who, your husband?

EUGENIA. Anybody - no matter - hunt about as if you looked for somebody.

[ENTER DASHWELL AND JANE.]

JANE. I say have a care, have a care.

DASHWELL. Have a care of what, you silly baggage? Wife, what makes you tremble?

EUGENIA. Oh Lord, husband, I am so frightened.

DASHWELL. Ha! A drawn sword: what's he there? Who are you, sir? What would you have, sir?

RAMBLE. Have, sir - ?

EUGENIA. Indeed, sir, he is not here. Pray be pacified.

RAMBLE. I'll be the death of him; his blood shall pay for the affront.

SCENE NINE

EUGENIA. Indeed, sir, he is not here.

RAMBLE. Come, come, down on your knees, all of you, and confess.

DASHWELL. What means this, wife?

RAMBLE. Down on your knees, sir.

DASHWELL. Knees, sir?

EUGENIA. He is not here, upon my word, sir.

DASHWELL. He is not here indeed, sir. Who is't, wife?

RAMBLE. He must be here - I followed him.

JANE. Indeed, sir, he went out again.

RAMBLE. No, he must be hereabouts; I'll not leave a corner unsearched - Ha!

[HE COUNTERFEITS A RAGE, THROWS OPEN THE BED CURTAINS,
PULLS OFF THE BED CLOTHES AND DISCOVERS LOVEDAY IN THE BED.]

EUGENIA. Ah!

DASHWELL. A man in my bed.

[EUGENIA SHRIEKS TO RAMBLE, CATCHES HIM BY HIS ARM AND SWOONS.]

JANE. Oh, hold, sir, for Heaven's sake, my Mistress swoons.

RAMBLE. Madam, be not frightened, I'll not meddle with him now for your sake.

DASHWELL. What means all this?

RAMBLE. Your house protects the man that hath done me such injuries, but when I meet him abroad, let him guard well his throat; had he twenty lives he should not live one hour after.

DASHWELL. Pray, sir, let me know the meaning of this, and how the young man has offended you.

RAMBLE. [HESITATES] I cannot think on't without rage; let some of them tell you.

DASHWELL. What have you done to the gentleman to provoke him?

LOVEDAY. Done to him, sir - no great matter - done a -

EUGENIA. I'll tell you, husband. Jane being in the street and seeing this gentleman pass by, was so foolish to shriek and cry out 'The Devil, the Devil!' The gentleman following her and pressing to know the meaning, she told him she saw the Devil in his shape last night, and how one in this house raised him in his likeness. Upon this, the gentleman, being incensed, rushed into the house, ran into every room to look for the young man, and had like to have surprised him in his chamber, but fortunately, hearing him threaten, he slipped downstairs and ran in here for shelter. And had not Jane and I hid him in my bed, he had certainly been murdered.

RAMBLE. Do you not think, sir, I had reason to be angry?

DASHWELL. What a silly baggage were you!

JANE. Truly, sir, it was my fright; the Devil last night and this gentleman were so like.

DASHWELL. Nay, he was very like him, that's the truth on't!

RAMBLE. Sir, now you know the reason, I hope you'll excuse my intruding into your house - and I beg your pardon, madam, for frightening you. As for that conjurer, let him beware how he stirs over your threshold; he may safer leave his circle when he's raising the Devil than stir forth of these doors: let him look to't; so your servant, your servant.

[ASIDE] Oh, false, damned false woman!

[EXIT RAMBLE.]

DASHWELL. Jane, go down and lock the door after him, lest he should return and surprise us.

[EXIT JANE.]

LOVEDAY. Madam, I thank you. Truly, sir, under Heaven, I think your lady has saved my life, for had it not been for her, he had certainly murdered me.

DASHWELL. He's a damned choleric fellow; I am glad you escaped so well. Sir, keep close today, tomorrow I'll provide for you out of his reach. I have found a friend that will entertain you in a very good employment.

LOVEDAY. I thank you, sir.

EUGENIA. How happened it that you returned so luckily, husband?

DASHWELL. By especial Providence, I think. I was to have dined where I told you, but all that's prevented - Alderman Wiseacres is not like to bed his bride to night.

EUGENIA. How, is anything happened amiss?

DASHWELL. Alderman Doodle brought him news that there is a ship come up the river, in which they both have very great concerns. The messenger is come from the master of the ship, to desire 'em to take boat and go down, this tide. I suppose some seizure of prohibited goods or the like, I did not enquire into the matter, but they must go.

EUGENIA. 'Tis some great business that can call him away from his bride the first night of his marriage.

DASHWELL. Nay, they are in such haste they can't stay dinner, but that is because of the tide, I suppose. And I am glad it fell out so, since my coming back saved a man's life, for aught I know.

EUGENIA. Indeed, so am I, husband.

DASHWELL. Come, let's have dinner.

EUGENIA. Yes, presently, husband. I'll go below and give order for't.

[EXIT EUGENIA.]

DASHWELL. Come, sir, whilst dinner is getting ready, you and I will take a turn in the garden, and I'll let you know how I intend to provide for you.

LOVEDAY. I'll attend you, sir. I thank you for your generous care.

[ASIDE] Eugenia, now I love thee more than ever. How handsomely she brought all off!

[EXEUNT.]

SCENE TEN

[A ROOM IN WISEACRES' HOUSE.]

[ENTER WISEACRES AND DOODLE.]

WISEACRES. Come, brother, are you ready to go?

DOODLE. I have sent for my wife, to speak two or three words with her, and I have done. Methinks it is very unlucky that business should fall out thus on your wedding day.

WISEACRES. 'Tis so at present, but hereafter, I shall never be much concerned at anything that calls me away, knowing what security I have of my wife in my absence, from her simplicity - and I will now confound all your arguments to the contrary, and convince you of your error.

DOODLE. Well, let's see.

WISEACRES. Ho, wife Peggy!

[ENTER PEGGY AND AUNT.]

PEGGY. Here, and please you.

WISEACRES. There's my dainty Peggy.

AUNT. [TO DOODLE] There is a gentlewoman without, your wife I humbly suppose, enquires for you.

WISEACRES. I'll not have my Peggy entertain any London wife, especially no witty wife.

DOODLE. Well, tell her that I'll come presently.

AUNT. Ay, forsooth.

[EXIT AUNT.]

DOODLE. Well, well, Mr. Alderman, come to my conversion now - make haste, or my wife won't stay.

WISEACRES. Won't stay? There's a witty wife for you.

DOODLE. Well, well, pray to the business.

WISEACRES. Now pray sit down and observe. Peggy, here, come to me, Peggy.

PEGGY. Yes, forsooth.

WISEACRES. Your curtsy

[PEGGY CURTSIES.]

so, that's as I am your Uncle; another now as I am your husband

[PEGGY CURTSIES.]

so, now stand before me. You know, Peggy, you are now my wife.

PEGGY. Yes forsooth, so Aunt tells me.

WISEACRES. And that is a happiness for which you are to thank Heaven, that you have married a discreet sober person.

PEGGY. Yes, forsooth.

WISEACRES. One that will keep and preserve you from all the mad roaring bears, bulls and lions in the Town, that would without him devour thee alive.

PEGGY. Oh, but forsooth, Nuncle-Husband, you won't let 'em now, will you?

WISEACRES. No, no - and for this, you are to observe my will and pleasure in all things.

PEGGY. Yes, forsooth.

WISEACRES. Now tell me, Peggy, do you know what love is?

PEGGY. Love - it is to give one fine things.

WISEACRES. How know you that, Peggy?

PEGGY. Because, forsooth, Nuncle-Husband, Aunt said you loved me, and therefore that you gave me this petticoat and mantle, and these ribbons.

DOODLE. Oh very well, she'll learn in time.

WISEACRES. But now you are my wife, Peggy, and you are to love me, and the love of a wife to her husband is to do all things that he desires and commands.

PEGGY. Yes, forsooth.

WISEACRES. But, beside the love of a wife, Peggy, there is the duty of a wife. Do you know what the duty of a wife is?

PEGGY. Duty, Nuncle, what's that?

WISEACRES. I have not time to instruct you tonight in the whole duty of a wife, because business calls me away. I will therefore only inform you at present what the duty of a wife is to her husband at night, which is to watch whilst he is asleep, and be his guard whilst he takes his rest.

PEGGY. Yes, forsooth.

[ENTER ARABELLA LOOKING IN AT THE DOOR.]

ARABELLA. I have heard all so far, but now I'll venture to peep, and see a little.

WISEACRES. That duty, Peggy, is to be done in this manner; here, put on this fine gilt cap and feather - so, now take this lance in your hand - so. Now let me see you walk two or three turns about the room - so. Now this are you to do part of the night.

PEGGY. Yes, forsooth, Nuncle.

WISEACRES. And this respect must you show in my absence; for though I shall not be here present tonight, yet upon my pillow do I here leave my nightcap, which is the emblem of me, your husband, and you must show all duty and reverence to that nightcap, as if it were myself.

PEGGY. Yes, forsooth.

ARABELLA. Oh, ridiculous!

SCENE TEN

DOODLE. Can she be so very simple to believe this?

WISEACRES. Peace, let me alone. This is the duty of a wife here in London when their husbands are absent. So now let me see you practise this lesson. Begin your march,

[DEMONSTRATES PACING THE ROOM, PRESENTING ARMS, SLOPING ARMS ETC.]

now make your low curtsy to my nightcap. So - this likewise must you do when you leave off at break of day.

PEGGY. Oh, indeeds, Nuncle, yes.

DOODLE. Well, never was there such a piece of simplicity as this seen before.

WISEACRES. Now will she be watching all night, and asleep all the day; so will she be always free from the impertinencies of the world. What security like this can such as you have with your witty wives?

DOODLE. Well, I say no more - but I would fain see the first year of your marriage over.

WISEACRES. Well, now I'll be taking my leave. Adieu, my Peggy.

PEGGY. Adieu, forsooth, Nuncle-Husband.

WISEACRES. There's my best Peggy. I wonder now what kind of caution you give your wife, and what security you'll have of her behaviour in your absence.

[ARABELLA COMES FORWARD.]

ARABELLA. A little better, I hope, than you have of your Mistress Ninny there.

WISEACRES. Is she here?

ARABELLA. But I'll give her a lesson shall make her wiser.

WISEACRES. Go, withdraw.

ARABELLA. No, pray stay a little!

DOODLE. What frolic now, wife?

ARABELLA. You are going out of Town, husband?

DOODLE. Yes, wife.

ARABELLA. [POSITIONS A STOOL] Do your duty then, and come and kiss me.

DOODLE. Ay, with all my heart, wife.

ARABELLA. Nay, come not round but over the stool - nay, jump, jump!

[DOODLE JUMPS OVER AND KISSES HER.]

DOODLE. So, there, wife.

[ARABELLA GOES ROUND THE STOOL.]

ARABELLA. So, now back again, this way.

DOODLE. So, thou art such a wag, wife. [HE JUMPS BACK AGAIN.]

ARABELLA. There's a husband for you. Look you, little gentlewoman, your husband has taught you your duty; now do you teach him his, and make him do this every night and morning. You must learn your husband to come over and over, again and again, and make him glad to jump.

WISEACRES. She'll ruin all my design! Here, good neighbour - take your wife home.

ARABELLA. You teach your wife to reverence your nightcap. Look ye, Mistress Peggy, take his greasy nightcap thus, and throw it downstairs, and him after it.

WISEACRES. Away, Peggy, away. This is a madwoman - see how she flings about. Away, or she will tear thee to pieces.

PEGGY. Oh, La!

WISEACRES. Away, Peggy, away.

[EXIT PEGGY IN HASTE.]

DOODLE. So, so, enough, wife - thou hast had thy frolic.

ARABELLA. You are a fine man indeed. Marry a woman to make a fool of her!

WISEACRES. Well, your husband here may do what he please with you. Let me alone to give my wife what instructions I think fit.

DOODLE. Why, look you, my wife has a good forward wit of her own, and needs but little admonition; but you shall hear now what I say to my wife - Well, dear, I sent for thee to let thee know I am going, and to take my leave of thee.

ARABELLA. Thank you, husband.

DOODLE. Now, wife, I need give thee no instructions how to behave yourself while I am gone - I trust all to thy own discretion. I have only one thing to request of thee.

ARABELLA. What is that?

DOODLE. Only this: that till my return, to all impertinent men that ask you any questions, or talk to you, answer 'em all with No. Let 'em say what they please, let your answer still be: No, no.

ARABELLA. Well, husband, I guess at your meaning, and till I see you again, I will be sure to sing no other tune to any manner of man but No. All that I answer or say to 'em, shall be nothing but No, no, no.

DOODLE. You promise me?

ARABELLA. Yes, sincerely.

DOODLE. Good; bear witness, Mr. Alderman. I have done, wife.

WISEACRES. And is this all the surety you take?

DOODLE. Yes.

ARABELLA. And a wiser course than you have taken, I hope, that leaves your wife to walk about your chamber all night like a knight in armour.

WISEACRES. I wish he may find it so.

SCENE TEN

DOODLE. Ay, ay, let us see who'll have reason to complain first. Now, wife, we'll be going to the water-side. Wife, you remember your promise?

ARABELLA. Yes.

DOODLE. Then, wife, adieu.

ARABELLA. Da, da, husband.

[EXEUNT WISEACRES AND DOODLE.]

ARABELLA. Well! No is the word. What can be made of this No?
Now let a woman, if circumstances hit,
Once try without her tongue to show her wit.

[EXIT ARABELLA.]

SCENE ELEVEN

[THE SAME STREET. NIGHT.]

[ENTER TOWNLY, RAMBLE.]

RAMBLE. Tonight, Frank, I am for a bottle with thee; my own ill fortune and thy counsel have at last converted me.

TOWNLY. Do you think you shall not relapse?

RAMBLE. Henceforth I'll never make love my business.

[ENTER AT A DISTANCE ARABELLA, MUFFLED IN A HOOD, AND ENGINE.]

ARABELLA. This night walk in Draper's Garden has done me good.

TOWNLY. What women are yonder?

RAMBLE. None that shall divert me from my resolution of going to the tavern.

ENGINE. If we had met Mr. Ramble in our walks, Madam - ?

ARABELLA. I utterly declare against that unfortunate gentleman. But if his friend Mr. Townly had come in my way -

ENGINE. You could not have diverted yourself, now I think on't - you are under an obligation to say nothing but No.

ARABELLA. You should have seen how I'd have managed that No to the best advantage, to the confusion of my husband's stratagem. I hate to be outwitted - Is not that Mr. Ramble?

ENGINE. Yes, and the other Townly, the man you wished for.

TOWNLY. [LAUGHS] Now I have hopes of thee.

[PEGGY, DRESSED FOR SENTRY DUTY, COMES ON THE BALCONY OF WISEACRES' HOUSE, TO PRESENT ARMS.]

RAMBLE. I have not the least inclination now to any intrigue - except it be with that foolish little innocent thing I told you I met last night. I'll not make love my business -

[TURNS HEAD.] Egad, what vision is this? There she stands upon the balcony - like a soldier at sentry-go. I'll not make love my business - but if opportunity present, I'll nick the critical minute!

[PEGGY HAS GONE BACK INSIDE.

RAMBLE TO BELOW THE BALCONY, WHERE HE GAZES RAPTLY UP.]

TOWNLY. So, let him be. I'm for the lady.

ENGINE. Madam, he comes this way.

ARABELLA. Run you in o' doors, I'll follow you.

[ADJUSTS HER HOOD TO CONCEAL HER FACE.]

[EXIT ENGINE.]

SCENE ELEVEN

TOWNLY. Madam, I am your most humble servant.

ARABELLA. No.

TOWNLY. Will you not give me leave to wait on you?

ARABELLA. No.

TOWNLY. Nor stand and talk with you?

ARABELLA. No.

TOWNLY. I am in love with you; will you be hard-hearted to a man that loves you?

ARABELLA. No.

TOWNLY. By Jove, I would kiss thee for that, but that I fear 'twould put you out of humour.

ARABELLA. No.

TOWNLY. That was kindly said there. [KISSES HER.] Now, shall I wait on you to your door?

ARABELLA. No.

TOWNLY. Ah, that spoils all again. Do, carry me to your house, I'll steal in unseen and we'll discourse in private.

ARABELLA. No.

TOWNLY. Must I then be gone and leave you?

ARABELLA. No.

TOWNLY. I find she has taken a humour to say nothing else, I will fit her with questions; now, lady, answer me at your peril. Beware you don't tell me a lie - Are you a maid?

ARABELLA. Ha, ha, ha!

TOWNLY. She laughs at that! A widow, then?

ARABELLA. No.

TOWNLY. A wife! Is your husband at home?

ARABELLA. No.

TOWNLY. Is he in Town?

ARABELLA. No.

TOWNLY. Would you refuse a bedfellow in his room tonight if you liked the man?

ARABELLA. No.

TOWNLY. If I go home with you, will you thrust me out?

ARABELLA. No.

TOWNLY. Nor if I come to bed to you?

ARABELLA. No, no, no, no, no. Ha, ha, ha.

[EXIT ARABELLA LAUGHING.]

TOWNLY. Egad, she's run in laughing. I know not whether she be in earnest or in jest. But here's a fair opportunity for a night's diversion - we have concluded a bargain in the negative already. I'll in after, and give her earnest of my affections to bind her sure for the future.

[EXIT TOWNLY.]

SCENE TWELVE (Continuous)

[PEGGY'S ROUND OF SENTRY DUTY BRINGS HER BACK INTO VIEW,
RAMBLE GAZING UP AT HER.]

RAMBLE. [ASIDE] What can be the meaning of this armour?

[ALOUD] Fair maiden -

PEGGY. [STARTLED] I am a wife, sir.

RAMBLE. A wife! And how long have you been married, pretty miss?

PEGGY. I was married this morning betimes.

RAMBLE. And where is your husband?

PEGGY. He is gone a journey about business, forsooth.

RAMBLE. And when does he return?

PEGGY. I do not know.

RAMBLE. And who dressed you thus prettily?

PEGGY. My Uncle-Husband showed my Aunt to dress me so.

RAMBLE. Your Uncle-Husband?

[ASIDE] The old man that took her from me last night! He has married her and put some trick on her.

[ALOUD] Where is your Aunt?

PEGGY. Asleep, forsooth.

RAMBLE. And to what end did they dress you thus?

PEGGY. Why, don't you know the duty of a wife, and live here in London? It is to watch whilst her husband sleeps, and to walk thus by him all night.

RAMBLE. [ASIDE] Ridiculous!

[ALOUD] But your husband, you say, is out of Town?

PEGGY. Yes, but there is his nightcap, forsooth, and that's all one.

RAMBLE. [ASIDE] She's merely imposed upon.

SCENE TWELVE

[ALoud] And is this all you know of the duty of a wife?

PEGGY. This is as far as I have learned yet, but Uncle will teach me more when he comes back.

RAMBLE. Would you not thank a man, pretty Peggy, that would teach you your lesson perfect before he comes?

PEGGY. Oh! Yes.

RAMBLE. Don't you think you could learn as well from me as from him?

PEGGY. Yes, but they told me that such a one as you last night would eat me.

RAMBLE. But nobody shall eat you whilst I am with you, and I will stay with you tonight and take pains to instruct you in the whole duty of a wife.

PEGGY. Will you, indeed?

RAMBLE. [ASIDE] Lord, Lord, she's willing too, she has more wit than I thought.

[ALoud] Yes, indeed will I, and now Mistress Peggy, you must lay by your lance, and those things, and go to your bed.

PEGGY. But my Uncle-Husband said I was not to go to bed till morning that Aunt came to me, and that I was to do so all night, or he will be angry.

RAMBLE. [ASIDE] Never was there such a little fool as this.

[ALoud] But your Uncle-Husband came to me and bid me come to you and teach you the right duty, and bid me tell you that you must go to bed and do as I'd have you.

PEGGY. Oh, then, indeed I'll go to bed, and you'll come and teach me.

RAMBLE. Ay! Ay! Come to the door, pretty Peggy, and I'll instruct you in all. Make haste!

[EXIT PEGGY.]

RAMBLE. The Aunt will come in in the morning. A little before day I'll make my escape. What pleasure shall I have to teach her her first love lesson!

[SOUND OF BOLTS UNFASTENED. EXIT RAMBLE INTO WISEACRES' HOUSE.]

SCENE THIRTEEN

[A ROOM IN DASHWELL'S HOUSE.]

[ENTER LOVEDAY, AND EUGENIA.]

LOVEDAY. Must I be gone then tomorrow morning?

EUGENIA. So my husband has resolved. He is afraid you should be killed if you stay here in Town, and therefore is writing to a correspondent of his at Bristol to entertain you.

LOVEDAY. Oh unlucky accident, how he cuts off all my hopes! I cannot think of parting from you.

EUGENIA. What will you do? You must go from hence.

LOVEDAY. To be defeated, not to gain one hour's enjoyment of my love, both to be resolved and willing, and yet disappointed! Hard fate.

[ENTER JANE.]

EUGENIA. Jane, has your Master almost done his letter?

JANE. Yes, Madam, he is coming down.

EUGENIA. I hear him, step you into the next room, listen at the door, but make no noise - away.

[EXIT LOVEDAY.]

[ENTER DASHWELL.]

DASHWELL. Where, where, is Valentine not come down yet ?

EUGENIA. Yes, husband, but I have sent him up again. He is not the person you take him for.

DASHWELL. What mean you?

EUGENIA. I mean, he is a very impudent rascal, and only fit to be kicked out of doors.

DASHWELL. What has he done?

EUGENIA. He had the impudence e'en now to tell me that his coming here was for my sake, and that it would break his heart to leave the house till he had accomplished his design.

DASHWELL. Meaning a design on you?

EUGENIA. Yes.

DASHWELL. A rogue!

EUGENIA. He hoped, that since time allowed him not further opportunities of courtship, I would consent to steal out of bed from you when you were fast asleep, and slipping on my nightgown, meet him under the summer house in the garden.

DASHWELL. So, so.

SCENE THIRTEEN

EUGENIA. You never heard a man so confident, and so urging. "Sure, madam," said he, "since I have adventured so much for your sake, you will not be so unkind to let me lose my labour and go unrewarded." "No, sir," said I, "You shall not go unrewarded, I will meet you as you desire."

DASHWELL. What meant you by that, wife?

EUGENIA. To be revenged of him for his insolence! Now, that he may not lose his reward I would have you dress yourself in a nightgown, and go down in the dark, take a good cudgel in your hand and stay in the summer house till he comes, and drub him soundly, then turn him out of doors. You may let Jane be with you to help you.

DASHWELL. I am glad you have discovered the rogue; that shall be his punishment. I would not for a hundred pounds I had sent him where I intended. An insolent dog! "Lose his labour"! I'll give him the fruits of his labour. Jane -

JANE. Sir?

DASHWELL. Get me a good cudgel quickly, and meet me below in the garden.

JANE. Yes, sir.

EUGENIA. Husband, you had best have something white about your head. Jane, help to dress your Master; put on him your nightgown.

DASHWELL. Jane, bring 'em below. Wife, go you to your rest, I'll bring you the news as soon as I have met with him. I'll baulk him for assignations, a rogue - cuckold a citizen!

EUGENIA. Ay, do, husband. I'll pray for your good success.

[EXIT DASHWELL.]

EUGENIA. Jane, make haste down to him, and when you go out, spring-lock the garden door that he may not get in again, and be as long in dressing of him as you can.

JANE. Yes, yes, Madam.

[EXIT JANE.]

EUGENIA. Come, sir, come from your post.

[ENTER LOVEDAY.]

LOVEDAY. Dear creature! Witty rogue!

EUGENIA. How do you like my invention?

LOVEDAY. Egad, you puzzled me at first when you told him I was not the person he took me for.

EUGENIA. An hour is our own by this invention.

LOVEDAY. Let us retire, Eugenia, and make the best use on't we can,
And let our joys no moderation find,
Whilst Love has power, and Beauty can be kind.

[EXEUNT.]

SCENE FOURTEEN

[THE SAME STREET. EARLY MORNING.]

[ENTER WISEACRES AND DOODLE.]

DOODLE. It was well the Master of the ship came up as he did, for if we had missed him and gone down on a fool's errand, it would have vexed you to have lost the first night's lodging with your bride, for a cold voyage to no purpose.

WISEACRES. It fell out luckily. Now will I go to my little wife, whom I shall find upon guard duty. Well, brother, I am mightily pleased with my invention.

[WISEACRES KNOCKS AT HIS DOOR.]

DOODLE. 'Tis a strange one in my opinion.

WISEACRES. Yes, but a safe one.

DOODLE. What will she say when she finds you have deceived her?

[WISEACRES KNOCKS AGAIN.]

WISEACRES. I'll tell her that was the duty of a wife to a husband in his absence, that I may have her at a sure lock, whenever I have occasion to go a journey hereafter.

DOODLE. Well! And I will go home to my wife, and set her tongue at liberty. I can't but think how pleasant it would have been, if any fop had met my wife a-walking and gone to pick her up, to hear her still answering nothing but No, No!

[WISEACRES KNOCKS.]

WISEACRES. Ay, brother. Nobody hears yet.

DOODLE. Knock harder.

AUNT. [WITHIN] Who's there?

WISEACRES. 'Tis I - open the door.

[SOUND OF BOLTS UNFASTENED]

[ENTER AUNT, ROUSED FROM SLEEP.]

AUNT. [YAWNING] I did not expect you back tonight, forsooth.

WISEACRES. We met with news that prevented our voyage.

DOODLE. Now I'll bid you good-night.

WISEACRES. No, you shall stay and go in with me, and see how obedient my wife is.

DOODLE. Well, to satisfy you I'll just step in and see her.

[EXEUNT WISEACRES, DOODLE AND AUNT, DOODLE LETTING DROP A GLOVE.]

SCENE FOURTEEN

[ENTER RAMBLE ON THE BALCONY.]

RAMBLE. This must be the husband by his hard knocking. That a man cannot lie in quiet for cuckolds - he has broke the sweetest night's enjoyment. But I am glad I have overcome Fortune so far at last. I hear somebody come upstairs. I must venture to quit the house.

[AS RAMBLE GETS TO THE STREET, DOODLE ENTERS TO LOOK FOR HIS GLOVE.]

DOODLE. Where have I dropped my glove? Oh, 'tis here - Oh, oh, oh! Thieves! Thieves!

[RAMBLE RUSHES AT HIM AND BEATS HIM DOWN.]

RAMBLE. ["BURGLARIOUS" VOICE.] You lie, sirrah, hold your bawling, or I'll slit your gullet.

[EXIT RAMBLE.]

DOODLE. Agh - ah, ah, he is gone! He came from the house, was all unbuttoned - he has been dabbling with the bride; ay, ay, 'tis so.

[ENTER WISEACRES.]

WISEACRES. What made you cry out 'Thieves! Thieves!'?

DOODLE. I believe I was mistaken; it was no thief. He looked more like one that would steal away your honour, rather than your money.

WISEACRES. What, what?

DOODLE. Somebody that came to relieve your wife from that odd duty you put her upon. I believe she is out of her warlike gear, by this.

WISEACRES. Never. Thou shalt be witness of her simple fidelity. Peggy! Wife! Come forth! I do relieve thee of thy duty now!

[ENTER AUNT.]

AUNT. Ah, sir - I fear you will be very angry.

WISEACRES. Why, what's the matter?

AUNT. Peggy -

WISEACRES. What of Peggy, ha?

AUNT. - was gone to bed.

WISEACRES. To bed? Into bed?

AUNT. Ay, forsooth.

WISEACRES. Into bed! In contempt of my commands. Send her down to me quickly.

AUNT. She is coming, an't please you.

WISEACRES. Get you in.

[EXIT AUNT.]

DOODLE. Now see the effect of having a fool to your wife.

WISEACRES. I am not yet convinced I was in the wrong.

DOODLE. Nay, if your wife's going to bed, contrary to your orders, and a man's running from your house unbuttoned are no arguments - good night to you.

WISEACRES. The like to you.

DOODLE. A wife that's a fool - ha, ha, ha.

WISEACRES. Fare you well, fare you well.

[EXIT DOODLE.]

[ENTER PEGGY IN NIGHT CLOTHES, SOMEWHAT DISARRAYED.]

WISEACRES. Peggy, come hither. How durst you neglect your duty to me, your husband, and go to bed?

PEGGY. But I did not neglect my duty. I went to bed to learn my duty.

WISEACRES. Did not I teach you what you were to do?

PEGGY. But he taught me a better duty than that you showed me, a great deal.

WISEACRES. He - what he? What he is this?

PEGGY. He that you sent to be my master to teach me, that came last night, and asked me why I was armoured so, and when I told him you bid me, he said that was but the first duty, but he'd show me all the rest, and teach me every night's duty, and that you had sent him so to do.

WISEACRES. To do how?

PEGGY. Nay, but I can't tell you how - but I have learned a great deal of him, and if I were in bed I could show you.

WISEACRES. You are a baggage.

PEGGY. It was ten times a better duty than that you taught me, so pleasant I could do such duty all night long.

WISEACRES. Her simplicity makes me mad. Well, and where is this master? When went this instructor from you?

PEGGY. I don't know, but after he had taught me my lesson two or three times, I fell fast asleep I don't know how - and when I waked with the knocking at the door, I could not see him in the room.

WISEACRES. And what kind of man was he?

PEGGY. He was a fine handsome gentleman, methought!

WISEACRES. Ay, ay, you only thought so, 'twas all but your thought. There was no fine gentleman, nor nobody that taught you anything.

PEGGY. But there was, though.

WISEACRES. No, no, there was not.

PEGGY. But indeed, and indeed, Uncle-Husband, there was, now.

SCENE FOURTEEN

WISEACRES. 'Twas all but a dream.

PEGGY. Then, Uncle-Husband, may I dream always when I am asleep.

WISEACRES. How she torments me!

PEGGY. Indeed, Uncle-Husband, it seemed to me just for all the world as if I had been awake.

WISEACRES. No, no, I tell you 'twas all a dream; go, go, get you into bed. I'll come and instruct thee myself.

PEGGY. But can you instruct as well as he did?

WISEACRES. [ASIDE] Never was innocence in a woman a plague before.

[ALOUD] Yes, I'll come and do as he did. Go, get you in.

[EXIT PEGGY.]

WISEACRES. How spitefully has Fortune frustrated my design. But I will resolve to go in and go to bed to her, dissemble my grief and seem content. Ha! Here comes a gentleman; it may be my wife's instructor. I'll stand by and observe if he hankers about my house.

[ENTER TOWNLY.]

TOWNLY. Ha, ha, ha. "No, no, no." Ha! What's here?

WISEACRES. Who is that - Mr. Townly?

TOWNLY. The same, sir. Is it you, Mr Alderman Wiseacres?

WISEACRES. Yes, sir. You are in a merry humour - where are you going so late?

TOWNLY. I have had the pleasantest adventure I ever met with.

WISEACRES. [ASIDE] This may be concerning my wife. Pray what was it, sir? If it be no secret, sure it was very pleasant, you are so merry after it.

TOWNLY. Going along the street tonight, it was my fortune to offer my service to a lady.

WISEACRES. Ay, ay, a handsome lady cannot escape you gentlemen.

TOWNLY. Handsome or not I don't know, for she was muffled up in her hoods, and I could not see her face. But I have had three or four hours of the sweetest enjoyment.

WISEACRES. Pleasant indeed, sir.

TOWNLY. This lady has an odd humour to say nothing but No, No!

WISEACRES. No, sir? Ha!

TOWNLY. Yes, sir, to whatever I said she would answer nothing but No; not a word could I get from her but No, no, no.

WISEACRES. [ASIDE] Ha. Brother Alderman! This was his wife. Now will I go and stop his mouth.
[ALOUD] Do you know who this lady was, sir?

TOWNLY. Not I.

WISEACRES. You don't know her again if you should meet her?

TOWNLY. Not I.

WISEACRES. [ASIDE] A witty woman, i'faith.

[ALOUD] I have a great curiosity to hear this story at large, and I would desire your good company at a neighbour's house where I am going.

TOWNLY. Well sir, I'll wait on you, and as we go you shall hear it all.

WISEACRES. Come, sir, it is but just by here.

[EXEUNT.]

SCENE FIFTEEN

[THE GARDEN OF DOODLE'S HOUSE. EARLY MORNING, GROWING LIGHT. A TABLE WITH WINE AND GLASSES. ENGINE COULD BE SETTING THEM.]

[ENTER DOODLE, ARABELLA.]

DOODLE. Wife, I am glad to find thee up, but sorry thou could'st not sleep.

ARABELLA. Ah, something weighed upon me, husband.

DOODLE. A glass of sack will do thee no harm, I must drink a glass before I go to bed. Come, let us drink in the arbour here.

ARABELLA. I might rest better afterwards.

DOODLE. [SETTLING AT THE TABLE] Arabella, here's to thee.

ARABELLA. Thank you, husband.

DOODLE. If I had happened to have stayed a week away, how would'st thou have longed to have had thy tongue at liberty?

ARABELLA. No, I should have done well enough.

[KNOCKING.]

DOODLE. Hark, somebody knocks.

ARABELLA. [ASIDE] Pray Heaven my spark han't found the way back again.

[ENTER TOWNLY, WISEACRES, ENGINE.]

WISEACRES. So when she led you out blindfolded she gave you the slip?

TOWNLY. Yes.

WISEACRES. Cunning baggage.

ENGINE. Here is Mr. Alderman Wiseacres come to see you.

DOODLE. How!

ARABELLA. [ASIDE] And Townly with him - what can the meaning be of his coming again - and with him?

WISEACRES. Just as you parted from me, something came in my head that I had a mind to speak to you about, and meeting this gentleman of my acquaintance, I brought him along with me.

DOODLE. The gentleman is welcome. I just called for a bottle of wine. Engine - glasses for our guests.

[EXIT ENGINE.]

Sir, my service to you.

TOWNLY. Your servant, sir. Madam, my humble service to you.

ARABELLA. Your servant.

[ASIDE] I am in amaze!

DOODLE. Now, pray tell me what business brought you.

WISEACRES. Pray ask questions anon - and have patience to hear one of the pleasantest stories from this gentleman that ever you heard. Sir, will you do me the favour to tell that story again?

TOWNLY. With all my heart, sir.

ARABELLA. [ASIDE] Sure he has not told him what passed - I am mistaken if he could know me again.

WISEACRES. Come, sir, begin.

TOWNLY. Going along the street while it was dark, it was my fortune to meet with a lady, to whom I began to make some little courtships, but to everything I said, she answered nothing but No.

ARABELLA. [ASIDE] Ha!

TOWNLY. Nothing but No still. Whate'er I asked her was No.

DOODLE. Hum, so, sir.

TOWNLY. I asked her if I should be her servant, she said no, if she would let me wait on her home, she said no, no, still. At last perceiving she was resolved to make no other answer, I studied to ask such questions, and say such things to her, that if she answered no, it would please me well.

DOODLE. Very good, sir.

ARABELLA. [ASIDE] I shall be discovered; what shall I do?

TOWNLY. I asked her then if she would be angry if I went home with her; she said No.

WISEACRES. No, brother.

TOWNLY. If she would lie alone tonight; she said No.

[RE-ENTER ENGINE WITH TWO GLASSES, PLACES THEM AND EXIT.]

WISEACRES. No.

TOWNLY. If she would be angry if I came to bed to her? No.

WISEACRES. No, no, she said No, brother.

DOODLE. Well, well, I observe. Hum.

ARABELLA. [ASIDE] I shall be undone if he goes forward.

WISEACRES. Well, sir, go on

ARABELLA. Gentlemen, my service to you first.

[ARABELLA FILLS A GLASS AND SERVES WISEACRES.]

WISEACRES. Your servant, madam.

TOWNLY. So I'll tell you, gentlemen: upon this I saluted the lady and being now just come to her very door -

SCENE FIFTEEN

ARABELLA. [DELAYING] Here is wine for you, too, sir.

WISEACRES. By and by, sister, pray let him go on.

TOWNLY. In ran she, in ran I, upstairs went she into her chamber, ne'er a rush-light burning. I followed her, she locks the door, throws herself upon her bed, down throws I myself by her - or upon her as you may guess.

ARABELLA. [ASIDE] What shall I do?

WISEACRES. By your leave, sir, you told me that you put a ring upon the lady's finger when you were upon the bed with her.

TOWNLY. I did so.

ARABELLA. [ASIDE] Ah! The ring!

[FILLING TOWNLY'S GLASS, SHE DROPS IN A RUBY RING.
TOWNLY TAKES THE GLASS.]

[ALoud] Come, sir, pray begin this lady's good health, you can't but drink her health for her kindness, that's the least you can do.

TOWNLY. Madam, I'll drink it as long as I live for her sake.

WISEACRES. Lord, sister, you are so full of interruptions! There's more yet.

ARABELLA. Well, but the gentleman may drink first, the wine will die.

TOWNLY. Then, madam, my service to you - here's a health to the negative lady.

ARABELLA. Off with it, every drop, in honour of the lady.

TOWNLY. [ASIDE] Ha, a ring in my mouth, and the ring is the - Oh!

ARABELLA. Come, I'll pledge the Lady No's health.

TOWNLY. Well, to make my story short -

WISEACRES. Ay, sir, the rest of the story.

TOWNLY. I had the happiness to tumble this lady's bed some hours, behaved myself like a man, found her brisk and active. But on a sudden she rises from me, plucks me by the elbow to get up, then blinds me with her handkerchief, leads me a good way from her house, gives me a turn round, and slips away from me. When I perceived her gone, I plucked off her handkerchief, thinking to see where she went in, and turning back methought I had a glimpse of her, but running after her stumbled against a stone, fell down, and so lost sight of her.

DOODLE. Then you did not see where she went in?

TOWNLY. No, for with the fall I waked out of my dream.

DOODLE. Why - then all this is but a dream?

TOWNLY. Yes, sir.

WISEACRES. How! A dream?

TOWNLY. Ay, sir, a dream.

WISEACRES. Why, you did not tell me it was a dream.

TOWNLY. No, sir, for we arrived here just as we came to that part of the story.

ARABELLA. [ASIDE] He has brought all clear off.

TOWNLY. 'Twas in a dream, sir - but so sweet a dream, I could wish to dream't a thousand times o'er. Oh, madam - are you my Lady No?

[ARABELLA LAUGHS MERRILY.]

DOODLE. Truly, wife, I could not tell what to think on't, till I heard it was but a dream.

ARABELLA. Have a care, sir, the next time you have a fair lady in view, you make no such stumbles to lose sight of her.

TOWNLY. And let ladies have a care of leading men forth to Blind Man's Buff.

WISEACRES. And I say, let husbands have a better stratagem hereafter to secure their wives, than learning them to say nothing but No.

DOODLE. You think then there is more in this than a dream?

WISEACRES. Yes, and I brought this gentleman on purpose to let you see what is become of your No; there's a fine business indeed. No.

DOODLE. Hark you, brother Alderman, carry him home to your own house, and let him see what's become of the lady upon duty, and what becomes of your No, then?

WISEACRES. You know not what you say, you are in a dream; ha, ha, ha.

DOODLE. And I think your wife was in a fine dream. What think you of a fool for a wife now?

WISEACRES. As well as of a No witty wife; ha, ha, ha.

TOWNLY. What's the meaning of all this, madam?

ARABELLA. They don't know, themselves.

[DASHWELL, DISGUISED IN WOMEN'S CLOTHES,
AND JANE LOOK OVER A WALL THAT PARTS THE TWO GARDENS.]

JANE. Speak to 'em, sir, or their noise will spoil your design.

DASHWELL. Hark you, Mr. Wiseacres, and Mr. Doodle, there.

TOWNLY. Heaven! What foul fiend is that?

ARABELLA. Neighbour Dashwell!

DOODLE. Turned cotquean!

WISEACRES. What means this?

SCENE FIFTEEN

DASHWELL. You'll see anon. A villain has tempted my wife to meet him in the garden when I am in bed, to commit his felonious purpose against my honour. She has acquainted me with the wicked machinations, and has advised me to dress myself up thus, and to give him entertainment here in her place - and see how I am prepared to welcome him.

JANE. Sir, the traitor is coming.

DASHWELL. Hist! Then be silent all, I pray. Withdraw, and when you hear a noise, do not help the rogue though he cry out never so, for I will so caress him.

DOODLE. No, no, lay him on.

WISEACRES. Lay him on soundly.

TOWNLY. Now, if all this should be artifice between the wife and her gallant - ?

ARABELLA. Come, withdraw. We shall be able to guess anon.

[THEY WITHDRAW.]

[ENTER LOVEDAY WITH A WHIP.]

DASHWELL. Jane, stand close, be ready.

JANE. I warrant you, sir.

LOVEDAY. Oh that heaven of beauty I have left, that the sweet enjoyment might have for ages lasted! But I must awhile employ my thoughts how to come off with thy husband, for this is my present task.

DASHWELL. [FALSETTO] Hem. Hem.

LOVEDAY. The cuckold hems! Little thinks he how he is counter-plotted. Hist, where are you?

DASHWELL. Hem, here.

LOVEDAY. Where?

DASHWELL. Hist, here, here; hist.

LOVEDAY. Oh my dear! Art thou here? Let me prepare my arms to embrace thee, and give thee the sweet enjoyment of my love! Receive it then in this kind, hearty salutation.

[WHIPS DASHWELL.]

DASHWELL. Hold, hold, hold!

LOVEDAY. I'll take down your courage.

DASHWELL. Hold, help, help!

LOVEDAY. Make assignations in the night!

JANE. Wrong my lady!

[SHE BEATS HIM BEHIND.]

DOODLE. They swinge him bravely.

DASHWELL. Oh! Murder! Murder! Murder, Oh! Oh! Oh!

LOVEDAY. Did you think it could be my intention ever to wrong so worthy a gentleman as your husband?

DASHWELL. Oh, hold, hold; ye're deceived!

LOVEDAY. No, lewd woman, 'tis you are deceived in your expectation. Now I will go to your husband, and acquaint him what a chaste good wife you are.

DASHWELL. I say you are deceived.

[ENTER EUGENIA.]

EUGENIA. Well, husband, have you met with him handsomely?

LOVEDAY. Ha! Madam Eugenia! Who have I been handling then all this while?

DASHWELL. Oh, wife! I have been lashed and beat here most unmercifully.

LOVEDAY. Oh Lord, sir? Is it you?

EUGENIA. How! Have you been beaten? Sirrah, I'll have you hanged - first tempt me, and then beat my husband.

DASHWELL. Nay, nay, wife, 'twas a mistake.

LOVEDAY. Oh, misfortune! Have I been injuring you, sir, all this while?

DASHWELL. Nay, nay; I am convinced it was well meant.

EUGENIA. I acquainted my husband with your intentions, and sent him in my place to be revenged of you for your insolence.

WISEACRES. Mr. Dashwell, you have paid him off; ha, ha, ha.

DOODLE. Indeed, neighbour, you have cooled his courage for him. Do not your arms ache? Ha, ha, ha, ha.

DASHWELL. Well, well; talk no more of it, he did it but to try my wife for my sake; he meant no hurt.

TOWNLY. I find how the cards have been dealt.

WISEACRES. Hark you, neighbour Dashwell - now, if your zealous wife should have put a pious cheat upon you - ?

DOODLE. 'Tis very suspicious. What should make him, a stranger, so zealous to try your wife for you?

WISEACRES. I am afraid he *has* tried her for you, neighbour.

DASHWELL. Well, well, censure as you please. But this misfortune is a satisfaction to me; I heard your story e'en now in the garden, and I would not yet change my wife for her that had a man run from her chamber, nor for the Lady No, of whom that gentleman dreamed such a fine dream there; ha, ha, ha!

[ENTER AUNT, RAMBLE, WATCHMAN.]

AUNT. Come, bring him along, forsooth.

TOWNLY. How? Ramble here?

ARABELLA. My unlucky lover!

SCENE FIFTEEN

WATCHMAN. An't please you, Mr. Alderman, there was a cry of 'Thieves' at your door. As we were coming to you, we met this gentleman here, running along in a very suspicious manner.

AUNT. Ay, forsooth, a footpad on our footpath!

WISEACRES. It was Mr. Alderman Doodle there that cried out 'Thieves'- but it was a mistake; you may let the gentleman go.

DOODLE. But I dare take it upon my corporal oath this is the gentleman that came from your house.

[ENTER ENGINE AND PEGGY.]

PEGGY. Oh, pray now, show him me quickly, pray now!

ENGINE. Look you, they are all here.

PEGGY. Oh, Uncle-Husband!

WISEACRES. What came you for?

PEGGY. Indeed, Uncle-Husband, my Aunt told me this gentleman was carried away for a thief, and that he had robbed you, and must be hanged.

AUNT. Ay, hanged, forsooth.

PEGGY. And so I come to tell you he stole nothing, that I saw. He did nothing but teach me the duty of a wife - did you, sir?

RAMBLE. No, no, pretty one.

WISEACRES. Go, go, you are in a dream still.

PEGGY. Oh, but it was no dream, though! Now I see the gentleman, I am sure he taught me my lesson.

DOODLE. Ha, ha, ha. There's simplicity for you, brother.

WISEACRES. Take her hence.

PEGGY. Deeds, Nuncle-Husband, I had not come here but for the sake o' the gentleman.

WISEACRES. Take her away, or I'll break your bones.

AUNT. Ah, woe is me! We shall be all hanged, all hanged, forsooth.

[EXEUNT PEGGY, AUNT AND WATCHMAN.]

EUGENIA. Mr. Alderman, much good do ye with your foolish, innocent wife!

DASHWELL. I hope at last you are convinced?

WISEACRES. No, no, ne'er a whit - and so pray concern yourself with your zealous wife there, who was above at her devotions. And when the zealous fit was over, sent that gentleman there to chastise you in the garden for your folly.

DASHWELL. Well, well; ha, ha, ha.

WISEACRES. And you, Brother Alderman, concern yourself with your No stratagem, and your No witty wife, for she has done No-thing. And you are No Cuckold; good night to you.

ALL. Ha, ha, ha.

WISEACRES. Henceforth I'll keep her under lock and key, and ne'er more trust a wife's simplicity.

[EXIT WISEACRES.]

ARABELLA. Sir, I find you are the charitable man that has instructed the ignorant.

TOWNLY. Yes, yes, he has taught her more wit.

DASHWELL. Now, sir, give me leave to make peace with you for this friend of mine, and forgive him his conjuring.

RAMBLE. How! Valentine Loveday, my friend - were you the conjurer, then? How long have you been come from Hamburg?

DASHWELL. How! Valentine Loveday, and from Hamburg?

LOVEDAY. I am discovered.

DASHWELL. Nay, then I fear there's something more in this business than I yet apprehend.

TOWNLY. You have made mischief, Ned.

DASHWELL. Pray, sir, how came you to use this trick to get into my service?

LOVEDAY. How I came by his letter I'll acquaint you hereafter. Some friends of mine at Hamburg, who went lately from England told me: since she was married to you, she had lost her virtuous inclinations, disgusted with her marriage. The truth of this I resolved to know, purposing never to put trust in womankind if she was false. But now I am assured of her virtue!

ARABELLA. [ASIDE] He has a quick invention.

EUGENIA. I am neither beholden to your friends for their opinion, nor you for your belief.

LOVEDAY. And now, sir, I hope you are satisfied, and give me your pardon.

DASHWELL. Ay!

[SHAKES LOVEDAY'S HAND, BUT MUTTERS AS THEY DRIFT INTO GROUPS]

Yes, but not so well satisfied, neither.

DOODLE. Ay, ay, Mr. Dashwell, you may well scratch your head; for all your wife's virtue, you'll see the fruits of her zeal upon your forehead e'er long.

DASHWELL. I would not yet change my wife's virtue for your wife's wit, Mr. Alderman.

DOODLE. But, neighbour, consider this: the witty wife is the best of the three.

DASHWELL. To that I answer in your wife's own dialect: No.

DOODLE. Well, well, go in and anoint your back. Neighbour, you have been finely flayed, ha, ha, ha.

TOWNLY. How our cuckolds laugh at one another.

RAMBLE. Now I find how I lost both my mistresses: Eugenia repulsed me for you, Loveday, and you, Townly, leaped into *that* lady's saddle before me. But I am sure of my pretty simpleton whene'er I can come at her.

SCENE FIFTEEN

ARABELLA. Eugenia, now we know one another better, let us meet tomorrow, each confess the whole truth, and laugh heartily at the folly of our husbands.

EUGENIA. With mine you see how smoothly matters went - he is a cuckold, cudgelled and content.

[WE LEAVE THEM, ALL LAUGHING ABOUT DIFFERENT THINGS.]

[END.]

